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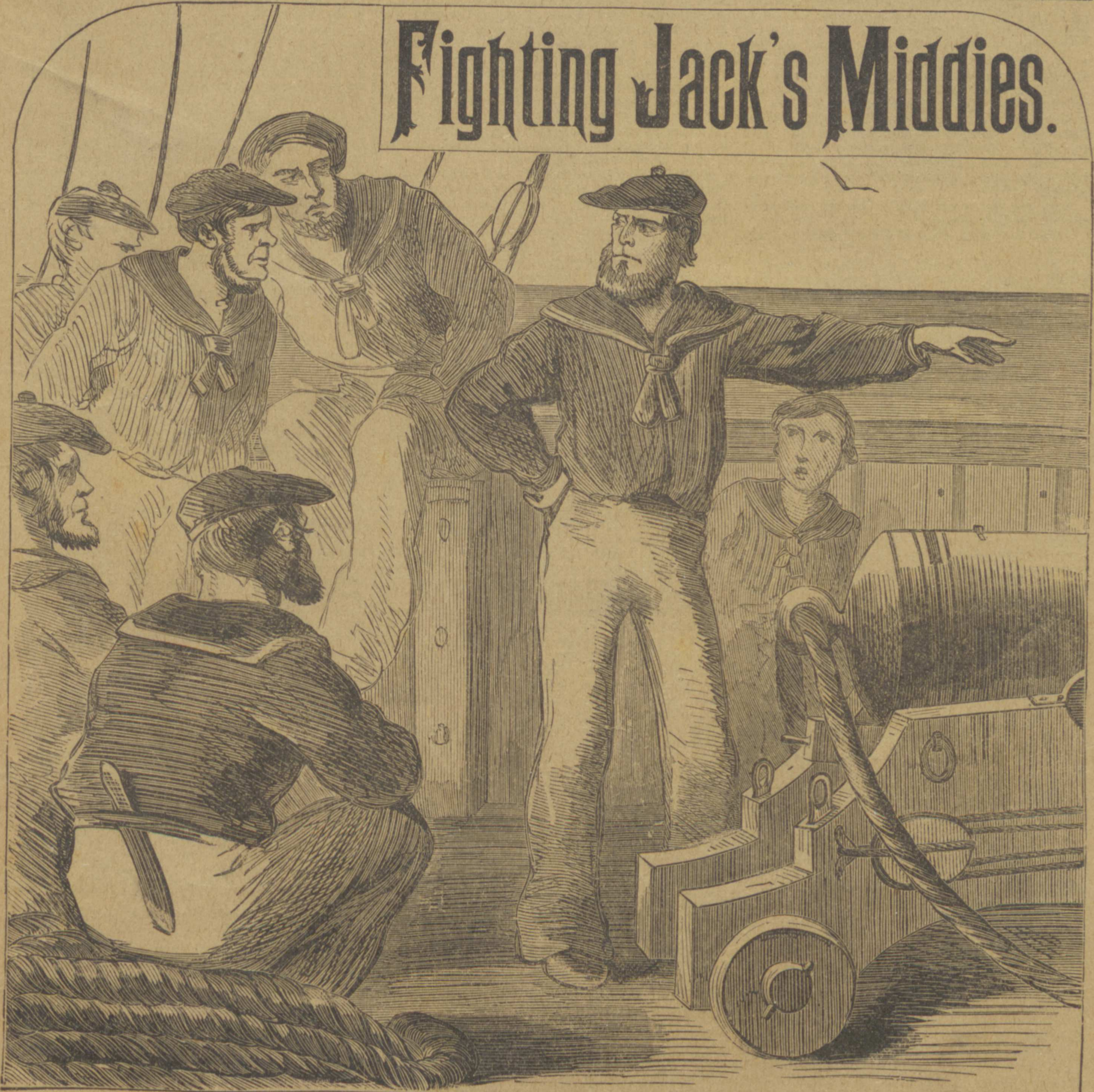
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Fighting Jack's Middies.



THE CONSTITUTION'S GUNS WERE IN READINESS FOR THE STRANGER.

2.50

Fighting Jack's Middies:

OR,

DANDY DICK'S DASH.

A Story of the Constitution's Cruise.

BY T. J. FLANAGAN,

AUTHOR OF "FIGHTING JACK SHUBRICK," "THE THREE LIEUTENANTS," ETC.

PROLOGUE.

ABOUT nine o'clock of a stormy night in the early part of November, 1812, Mrs. White, the proprietress of the "North Star"—an inn much frequented by seamen, situated in the lower part of the city of New York—breathed her last.

During the evening her half-dozen lodgers had congregated around the fire in the snug sitting-room, smoking and drinking as usual, but talking unusually little, and that little was almost whispered, for, with one exception, all were regular customers of the "North Star," and felt sad over the impending death of its kind-hearted, motherly mistress.

About nine o'clock, Jane, the chambermaid, who was attending Mrs. White, entered the sitting-room, looking a little out of temper.

"Oh, it's nothing!" she exclaimed, in response to the inquiring looks caused by her appearance in that room; but, as this did not relieve her feelings, for she was an old (and usually confidential) servant, she added:

"The missus had something—some secret, to tell to the young gentleman"—with great emphasis.

"So you got your walking-papers, eh?" suggested one of the men.

"Just so! And what if I did?" tartly retorted Jane.

"None at all, Jennie," soothingly interposed a big, brawny seaman, "and very proper, too, to my thinkin'. Mother 'n' son ought to have their last confab alone, before she slips her cable for the golden shore."

The angry domestic did not look particularly pleased to hear this approval of her mistress's conduct, but Maxwell was a general favorite, and she made no remark as she marched off to the kitchen.

"Hello! What's become of the Spaniard?" exclaimed one of the company, at this point.

"Gone off t' sleep, I s'pose—the lazy son of a sea-cook!" growled another.

The Spaniard referred to was the exception among the Widow White's customers, having arrived there for the first time about a month previous to the opening of our story.

Save that his name was Moredo, and that he appeared to have plenty of money, nothing was known of the new lodger. He neither worked, nor looked for work, his whole time being spent in and about the "North Star," and that, too, notwithstanding the fact that from the very outset Mrs. White had evinced a desire for his room rather than his company.

At the first word uttered by Jane regarding a secret communication between Mrs. White and her son, Moredo left the room, muttering something to the effect that he was "going to bed."

Instead, he stole up to the sick woman's chamber, and placing his ear to the door, heard Mrs. White say:

"But I must tell you, my dear boy! Something urges me to delay no longer."

"Why distress yourself, mother? To-morrow will do as well, and you may then be stronger," remonstrated her son.

"No, no, Raoul! To-morrow will not do as well—there is no to-morrow for me! And, besides—I am not your mother!"

"Ha! I knew it! I knew it!" muttered the listener.

"Hush, dear—don't interrupt me! I have much to say and little time, I fear, to say it," continued the dying woman.

"Fifteen years ago, on a stormy night, just such as this, your mother came here with you. She was very weak from recent sickness, and exposure to the weather, and had never recovered from it—dying a week after her arrival."

"Before her death, your mother told me something of what had happened her, but died before completing the story."

"Your father discovered a clew—some knowledge of a large amount of hidden treasure, and engaged a vessel and crew to the place where it had been buried by some pirates."

"The vessel reached the place in safety, but among the crew, it seems, was a man who knew the object of the voyage—for he had been one of the pirates—and this man created a mutiny. He did not know the exact spot where the treasure was buried, and demanded a map of it which your father had in some way obtained."

"Your father refused to give up the map and was killed, but the map was not found, for your mother had hidden it in the false bottom of a small music-box, which had been brought along to amuse you."

"That box on the shelf over my head is the music-box, and contains the map and other papers relating to yourself."

"The devil himself could not be up to the tricks of these women!" muttered the man at the door, as the widow paused for want of breath.

"But, how did my mother escape?" asked Raoul.

"It is a long story, and I can only tell you that after killing your father, the leader came and informed your mother, telling her that both you and she would share his fate, if she did not give up the map."

"Had they simply threatened to kill your father, and demanded the map, your mother would have surrendered it instantly, but the shocking intelligence of his death, delivered so brutally, as it was, appears to have driven her insane, and for months she wandered around unheeded—the would-be pirates spending their time hunting for the treasure."

"At length, one morning she awoke restored to her senses, and, providentially, a man-of-war came near in search of water, and through the boat sent on shore she managed to inform the captain of what had happened."

"The mutineers were captured and taken to England—I think—where some were hanged and the rest imprisoned on your mother's testimony, but she feared to remain in the same country with those still living."

"And the box—how did she regain that?"

"Your mother regained her reason to find herself and you in the cabin of the schooner—and the only persons on board. From her own appearance and yours she saw something strange must have happened since the demand made for the map, and this caused her to look for the music-box. It was lying on the floor, uninjured, among a heap of broken articles of every description which had been destroyed by the mutineers in searching for the hiding-place of the map."

"The box contained considerable money (and some jewels—which your mother had me sell), and when dying she directed me to spend this on you. That accounts for the education and bringing-up—so much, apparently, out of your station in life—which you have received, but much of the money remains, for I loved you as my own, and the inn will be yours when I die."

During the last few minutes the dying woman's voice was so weak and her story interrupted by spasms of painful coughing, as to be almost unintelligible to the unseen listener, but he had heard all that was important, and now substituted his eye for his ear at the key-hole—to make sure that the precious box should not be removed without his knowledge.

All that the eavesdropping watcher could see or hear was a youth bending over the form of the dying woman and sobbing a prayer in which she endeavored to join.

This lasted but a few minutes, when a cry from the youth announced the departure of the spirit of her whom he had called mother (and who had indeed been a mother to him), and then Tom White, as he was known, arose from his knees and walked toward the door.

As the youth advanced, the eavesdropper retreated further back in the dark passage, where he remained unnoticed by the boy, who went below to summon the female help to prepare Mrs. White for burial.

The moment Tom was out of the passage, Moredo entered the death-chamber, from which he emerged a few moments after, carrying a small box, and hurried to his own room, which opened off the head of the stairs.

Once in his room, and having locked his door, the midnight marauder, intent on immediate flight, and caring only for its precious contents—sought to open the box, but in vain.

"Conscience makes cowards of us all." Finding the false bottom resisted the point of his dagger, and fearing the noise which he must make in smashing it, would attract attention, Moredo laid the box aside, thrust the dagger into his bosom, and hurriedly prepared to depart.

The Spaniard's preparations were scant and

hurried—the donning of an oilskin coat and "sou'wester," and the wrapping up of the precious box to protect it from the storm, being all that he dare risk.

A very few minutes sufficed to complete these scanty preparations, and after listening a few moments to make certain no one was in the way, Moredo stole down-stairs—the precious box in his left hand, a dagger in the right.

At the foot of the stairs was a lantern, and as the faint light yielded by the candle in this, fell upon the Spaniard, Tom White entered the hall on his way to the floor above.

But for the attire of Moredo, and the gleaming dagger in his hand, the youth would have passed him unnoticed, and as it was, he had only stopped for a moment before the Spaniard struck him down.

As the youth sunk to the floor with a loud cry for help, the occupants of the sitting-room dashed out just in time to see the assassin rushing through the door.

CHAPTER I.

A TERRIBLE LESSON IN POLITENESS.

IT is a pleasant evening in October, 1812—just a trifle chilly, perhaps—enough so, at all events, to excite the fire glowing in a grate in a coffee-house in Boston.

Assembled in this room are civilians, and army and navy officers, and among the latter are two or three officers of the British frigate *Guerriere* (recently captured by the *Constitution*), who are on parole—one of whom is particularly disliked by all present.

This man—Carden, by name—is a powerful-looking fellow, and has proved himself an expert in the handling of both sword and pistol, having, during the short time he has been in Boston, killed one man and severely wounded several others, in duels which he provoked intentionally—by his offensive language regarding America, and Americans.

The habitués of the coffee-house soon began to fight shy of the bully, who they knew would pick a quarrel on the slightest pretext. A quarrel meant an insult or blow, and either, according to the ideas then prevailing, meant a duel.

It was for this reason that, on the night our story opens, Mr. Carden had the fire pretty much to himself, and although there was an arm-chair, with a newspaper lying on it, on the opposite side of the grate, nobody appeared anxious to occupy it—the paper had been placed there by Carden as if to tempt (or dare) somebody to do so.

Shortly after the "trap" had been baited, a youth of fifteen or sixteen entered the room, and inquired for Captain Lawrence. The latter was not present, but the naval officers referred the youth from one to another for information regarding the famous young captain's whereabouts.

The bully had noticed the boy going around the room, but had not been able to catch what his object was, and when in crossing the room the youth passed close to him, he called out to the latter to stop.

Heedless of the order, the youth was hurrying on to the officer to whom he had been last directed, when Carden thrust out his foot, and the lad stumbled and fell, striking his head against a chair.

No one had seen him do it, but there was an ugly suspicion that Carden was the cause of the boy's fall, and there were some threatening murmurs when it was seen that the latter had been injured enough to draw blood.

The bully appeared to derive an immense amount of amusement and gratification from the situation, and lying back in his chair, smiling maliciously, awaited the utterance of something which would give him an excuse for calling the speaker to account.

It is but justice to say that no one present was actually afraid of Carden, but there was a tacit understanding not to notice him in any way, and therefore the expected words were not uttered.

Seeing that there was no likelihood of fastening a fight upon any one through his last dirty trick, the bully left the room for a few minutes, hoping some one would take possession of either of his chairs during his absence.

He was not disappointed—though it was not one of the frequenters of the house who was caught. They knew the trick—had seen him play it before, when it cost an unoffending man his life.

Carden had barely left the room when a tall, fine, magnificently-built young man, in civilian's clothes, entered and took possession of the chair upon which the paper was lying.

A murmur ran round the room, and several of those nearest the stranger moved forward to warn him of his danger, but were stopped by a young army officer, who said:

"Hold on! Let things go as they are! We've stood enough of this fellow's bullying, and I, for one, will have no more of it!"

"If the gentleman who has just taken the chair leaves it when ordered, I shall take it. If he does not, and fights, and falls, then I'll challenge the ruffian, myself!"

"And if that man in the fatal chair is Lieutenant Shubrick—and I'm pretty sure he is—you'll never have a chance to challenge the other fellow," declared a young naval officer—a friend of the first speaker.

"Why?" asked several of the listeners.

"Because if it's Shubrick, he'll teach that bully a lesson that will keep his mouth closed for a long time. He's the quietest man in the navy, I've heard old officers say, but when he's aroused! Then you understand why they christened him Fighting Jack."

At this point Carden returned to the room, and smiled ferociously on seeing the stranger in possession of the paper and chair.

Striding across the room, he threw himself into his chair, and leaning forward began staring insolently at the stranger, but the latter calmly continued his reading. He had not paid the slightest attention to the noise made when Carden seated himself, and seemed oblivious of that gentleman's presence.

Thus ignored, the bully became very angry, and a suspicion that the bystanders were smiling at his efforts to provoke this wooden-like stranger, did not improve his temper.

"I say, sir!" he exclaimed, fiercely. "You have taken my paper. I'm not through with it."

The newspaper belonged to the house, and according to custom, the moment one person laid it down, another was at liberty to take possession of it, for newspapers were scarce in those days, and eagerly sought for in public-houses.

Just as Carden asserted his claim to the paper, the lad whom he had tripped re-entered the room, and mistaking the stranger at the grate for another gentleman, hurried over to him.

"Can you tell me, sir, where I can find Captain Lawrence?" he asked, as Carden finished.

"He will be here—" began the stranger, ignoring the bully, and addressing the boy, but the former interrupted him.

"Did you hear me, sir? I am not through with that paper!" he fairly roared.

Turning slowly toward the enraged speaker, the stranger gazed at him in mild astonishment mingled with curiosity—as if he were looking at some newly-discovered specimen of the animal kingdom.

This action caused a titter among the spectators, but the stranger did not appear to notice it, and with his eyes still fixed on Carden, said:

"Sit down, my lad. Captain Lawrence will be here inside of ten minutes."

"What d'ye mean, sir? What are you staring at?" thundered Carden, springing to his feet, infuriated as much by the amusement caused by the cool stranger's conduct, as the conduct itself.

"You look at me as if I were some wild beast—some curiosity—d'ye know it, sir?" he continued, striding up to the stranger.

"Well—yes," doubtfully admitted the latter.

Apparently, he did not understand what Carden meant, but the latter was now determined to pick a quarrel, and roughly exclaimed:

"You're an ass, sir, an ass! and let me remind you for the last time, I am waiting—"

"Take care, sir!" interrupted the youth, alarmed at Carden's threatening attitude; "take care, sir, or he'll hurt you as he did me," touching the blood-stained bandage around his head.

The stranger's eyes flashed on hearing this, but his voice was calm, and his manner even meek, as he asked:

"You were saying that you were waiting—"

"For that paper. Hand it over!"

Every one expected that this insolent demand would cause an explosion, and there was no little surprise and disappointment felt when the stranger meekly folded up the paper, and handed it to Carden.

Even the latter seemed surprised at this tame submission to his bullying, and when the former quietly asked: "Anything else, sir?" he laughed contemptuously, and answered:

"No, I've got all I want; I'm through with you."

The stranger looked at him, reflectively, and paused for a few moments before making any response. Then, in clear, cold, cutting

tones, plainly heard in every part of the room, and with his eyes fixed on Carden, he began:

"You will excuse me, I hope, for contradicting you, but you are not through with me! You may have got all you want, but you have not received all I want to, and shall, give you!"

"Presently, I shall spit down your dirty throat!"

The spectators, listening in dull amazement up to this point, now uttered exclamations—the majority, of astonishment, and approval—a few of disapproval and disgust, but heedless of the confused murmur that reached him the stranger calmly continued:

"At first, I mistook you for some harmless fool, and therefore, paid no attention to you, but now I recognize you as the cowardly hound who has been taking advantage of his skill to fix quarrels upon inexperienced, boyish officers, and inoffensive citizens—and then fairly murder them!"

Carden, who had sat as if paralyzed by amazement, now sprung from his chair, but even as he reached his feet, the stranger's hand grasped his throat and forced him down like a child!

"Down, you dog! Down! I'm not ready yet."

And, despite his struggles, the bully's head was bent back across the chair, and the other went on:

"But your victims were to blame for allowing themselves to be badgered into meeting such as you. My name is Shubrick. I am an officer, and if any of your comrades—any of the gentlemen who are compelled to associate with you—wish to take your part, I shall be glad to meet them, but for you—that is all you are fit to receive!"

With the last word, Shubrick grasped Carden by the nose and chin, tore his jaws apart until the bones cracked, and deliberately spat in his mouth!

Then, turning to the youth, he quietly directed:

"Follow me, my lad. Captain Lawrence is over here near the door."

CHAPTER II.

DANDY DICK.

At the same instant that Carden's jaw-bone snapped Captain Lawrence entered through a door facing Shubrick, and the latter had seen him.

For fully a minute not a sound broke the stillness that followed the terrible punishment of the bully, save the groans of the latter and the footfalls of Shubrick as, followed by the youth, he advanced to meet his friend.

"What's the row?" asked Lawrence, noticing the suppressed excitement visible on every side of him and hearing the groans of Carden.

Then everybody began talking to everybody else. Carden was led out of the room by an unsympathizing comrade, while Shubrick explained:

"That fellow has had his jaw broken, I believe; but never mind him; here's a lad who wishes to talk to you."

Thus cutting off any further immediate conversation regarding Carden, Shubrick stepped aside, and the youth came forward.

"Ah, Cooper! Looking for me?" asked Lawrence.

"Yes, sir. Captain Bainbridge wishes to see you as soon as possible, and I was sent to find you, and to say it was about a matter of importance."

"Sailing orders, as sure as fate!" exclaimed the captain, and beckoning to Shubrick, who was standing in the center of an admiring group of officers, passed out of the room.

"We'll have to give up our party—or, rather, I will," explained Lawrence, when his friend joined him.

"Mr. Cooper—my pet midshipman, Jack—bears a message from Bainbridge. Wants to see me at once about an important matter—sailing orders, without a doubt."

"Sounds like it," assented Shubrick, "and that being the case, I shall return to the ship with you."

"But Mrs. Danton will be very much disappointed," objected Lawrence.

"Oh, I'll arrange all that by sending her a note. Can Mr. Cooper deliver it?"

"Oh, yes! Dick won't mind," assured Lawrence, and "Mr. Cooper"—about fifteen and one-half years of age—bowed politely, and said he would be most happy to do so.

"A bright-looking lad, that, and very gentlemanly," observed Shubrick, as the young mid-

shipman departed with the note explaining the absence of Lawrence and himself.

"Yes, he's the pink of politeness—a perfect young gentleman, and every day I grow more and more convinced that he is a descendant of some of the French nobility."

"French nobility—Dick Cooper?" questioned Shubrick.

"Yes—but that is not his name, though all the name I know of—or he, either."

"He's Cooper right enough, however," continued Lawrence, "for he was formally adopted by an old gentleman of that name—an uncle, or relative of some kind of poor Dick Somers, that was lost in the Infernal."

"Ah, I see! That explains the name."

"Yes, to a certain extent, but his real name is a mystery. Old Mr. Cooper went to Tripoli after peace was established, to satisfy some doubts of poor Dick's mother, and on his way back stopped for some time in Paris, looking up some relatives of the Somers family, for, as you probably know, they are of French extraction."

"Whether he found any relatives, I do not know, but he did run across some friends of Dick's—the father and mother of this boy."

"The father was about to engage in some strange treasure-hunting expedition, and intended coming to this country when it was ended—for he was of the old nobility, and hated the existing Government."

"The wife was in delicate health, and her physician suggested that she should accompany her husband, but there were two children to be taken into consideration, and the father did not want to be bothered with them."

"Old Mr. Cooper then suggested that he would take charge of the older boy, and bring him to the United States—to his home in Philadelphia—where he invited the parents to visit him on their arrival here."

"The suggestion was adopted—the father, mother and younger child sailed away one fine day, and that was the last seen or heard of them."

The captain and lieutenant were now at the water-side, and while awaiting a boat the latter asked:

"But, surely, the old gentleman did not forget the lad's name—the name of the people with whom he had been so intimate?"

"That's just what happened. He had taken a great liking to the boy, and kept his story to himself until shortly before he died, a few months ago. I happened to be in port at Philadelphia at that time, and having been a friend of poor Dick Somers, the old man sent for me."

"He had waited too long, however, to say or do much, and was a little out of his head when I called, so I set down a good deal of the story he told me as nonsense, but the lad himself has since confirmed it in many particulars."

"It's a queer story," commented Shubrick.

"It is indeed, and I am much interested in the lad, not only because I am his guardian, in a manner, but, also, because of his being so different from the average youth of his age."

"He seems to have replaced poor Dick Somers in the old man's affections, and money was spent liberally—lavishly—in educating him."

"How long has he been with you?"

"About a month—and as I've only just obtained a commission for him, this, of course, will be his first cruise—in fact, this was his first day on board the Hornet."

The arrival of a boat closed the conversation, and in a few minutes both officers were on board the Constitution—being received by Captain Bainbridge, in person, who appeared to be delighted to have found Lawrence so quickly.

"By Jove, Lawrence," he said, taking the young captain's arm, and leading him to the cabin, "you'll have to give, or lend me, that midshipman of yours. He's as sharp as a steel-trap—just the boy I want."

Shubrick heard Lawrence utter a laughing protest against being robbed of his pet as he disappeared below, but within an hour an order was sent to the Hornet, directing Midshipman Cooper to prepare to exchange to the Constitution next morning.

"It's only temporary," explained Captain Lawrence, when he came aboard his own vessel, "and for that reason I did not oppose Captain Bainbridge's fancy to have you with him."

"Moreover, Old Ironsides is both famous and fortunate, and you will be certain to have better chances of distinguishing yourself in her than the Hornet, for you have Jack Shubrick—"

They were alone in the cabin. The youth had no knowledge of the superstition then (and for some years after) prevalent regarding "Shu-

brick's luck"—as it was called—and he wondered when his commander stopped short, looking rather confused.

The latter had taken the trouble to explain the situation to his midshipman, because the lad looked a little sad on entering the cabin, but he ceased explaining now, and continued:

"You will find Mr. Shubrick a very good friend, and Captain Bainbridge a kind and considerate commander."

"Be ready to leave immediately after breakfast. We sail early to-morrow."

The midshipman bowed and withdrew; he had quickly detected the change in Lawrence's tone and manner, and thoroughly understood that it was his commander who was now talking.

After leaving the cabin, the midshipman, not knowing what to do with himself, went on deck, and was just in time to meet Lieutenant Shubrick coming aboard with a message from his commander to Lawrence.

"Well, my lad," said the big lieutenant, in his usual cheerful, hearty way, "I understand you are going to honor us with your company in the Constitution?"

"Yes, sir."

"Glad to hear it! Have you packed up your traps?"

"Yes, sir; I'm all ready."

"Then take my advice, and have your kit put in the boat so that you can go aboard with me to-night, for we will sail earlier than was expected an hour ago."

"I'll arrange the matter with your captain," added Shubrick, as he descended to the cabin.

Half an hour later, Midshipman Cooper was on board the Constitution, and being introduced to the various officers assembled in the ward-room, nearly all of whom appeared to be as much taken with the handsome, gentlemanly youth as their commander.

"But, he looks rather delicate for the rough work that will be required of him," observed Lieutenant Alwyn, who was a powerful, rough-and-ready fellow, just promoted to a lieutenantcy for his bravery during the engagement of the Constitution and Guerriere."

"I don't agree with you, Alwyn," said Shubrick. "That lad's one of those deceptive-looking fellows, who are as hard as iron, and who, while they look as if they were on their last legs, can stand—"

"Hello! What's the row?"

After being introduced to the senior officers, the new midshipman was placed in charge of one of his comrades to be introduced to the others.

Ten minutes after Cooper and Warren—his companion—left the ward-room, there was a tremendous racket in the midshipmen's quarters, and the noise caused Shubrick to interrupt himself as above quoted.

"Guess the young one's getting licked," remarked Hoffman, the (now) second lieutenant.

As he spoke the noise ceased, and a moment after Warren entered—all smiles.

"Very sorry we made so much noise, gentlemen," he apologized, "we'd have gone aft, but Garret was in such a hurry, that it was going almost before we knew it."

"What was going? Couldn't you allow the boy one night's rest before abusing him?" sharply demanded Shubrick.

Warren's smile became a broad grin, as he answered:

"There was no intention to abuse him, sir, if you mean Mr. Cooper; but Garret did try a little bullying, and—well, it was the quickest—most beautiful thrashing you could wish to see. He left 'Garry' as limp as a wet rag inside of three minutes, and Garry's a good twenty-five pounds heavier than the little dandy."

"Eb? Licked Garret, did he? Gad! I'd have given something to see that bullying cub thrashed!" exclaimed Alwyn, adding:

"I guess you're right about that youngster of yours, Mr. Shubrick. As Warren puts it—he's a dandy, in more senses than one."

As is usually the case, the name "stuck," and "Mr. Midshipman Cooper" became "Dandy Dick."

CHAPTER III.

"MAN OVERBOARD!"

ON the day following the arrival of Dick Cooper on board the Constitution, that frigate, with the Hornet (a small eighteen-gun vessel, commanded by Lawrence), sailed from Boston.

The new midshipman of Old Ironsides, it was soon well known, had never seen service before, and, notwithstanding his having thrashed the

bully of the midshipmen's berth the previous night, the mischievous, fun-loving middies expected to extract no little amusement from their green comrade's first day at sea.

To the surprise of all, the new middy failed to become sea-sick, and Shubrick, who had promised Lawrence that his pet should not be too roughly handled, was agreeably surprised to find the lad perfectly capable of taking care of himself.

The lieutenant had arranged that Dick—as we may as well call him—should do duty, that is, walk the watch with him; but when he came on deck to take the first dog-watch (four to six in the afternoon), had not the slightest expectation of finding the middy fit for duty.

"Hello! Not sick, eh?" he cried on seeing the midshipman, who was in the act of descending from the mizzen shrouds and looking perfectly at home.

"Oh, no, sir—never felt better!" replied Dick, and, taking his station beside Shubrick, began pacing the quarter-deck.

Knowing the ordeal through which newly-appointed minor officers—midshipmen more especially—have to go, the latter was astonished to find that Dick was thus far free from molestation.

Indeed, at that very moment a newly-appointed surgeon's mate—Doctor Forreau—was being put through a course of sprouts, on the orlop deck, by the thoughtless youngsters.

Wondering as much at the lad's escape from the pangs of sea-sickness as his unusual immunity from the pranks of the midshipmen, Shubrick remarked:

"You seem to have got on your sea-legs pretty easily, Mr. Cooper."

"It is only seeming, sir," returned the middy, with a faint smile.

"Sick?"

"Oh, no, sir! But, in a heavy ship like this, it's strange that any one should become sick."

"Right, my lad—but how do you come to know that?" confirmed and questioned the deep voice of Alwyn—himself, probably, the most thorough seaman on board.

He had come on deck just in time to catch the last question and answer, and as Dick turned to reply, continued:

"This is your first cruise, is it not?"

"In a ship of size—yes, sir."

"What d'ye mean?" came the surprised question from both lieutenants—one because of what Lawrence had told him, and the other on account of the youthfulness of the middy.

The latter smiled at the wonder expressed in the tones, and exhibited in the looks, of his superiors, while he answered:

"I mean, sirs, that this is the first ship I have sailed in, but it is not my first cruise, for I've been in a great many foreign ports in my own schooner."

This statement was barely finished, when the newly-appointed surgeon's mate came rushing on deck—about half drunk, and wholly frightened; the elegant uniform in which he had arrayed himself, when coming on board, all in tatters, and, like his face and head, covered with flour.

"What does this mean, sir? Have you taken leave of your senses?" thundered Alwyn, grasping the frightened doctor, who was making for the side of the ship.

The lieutenant was a strict disciplinarian, and the sternness of his tone and manner was the reverse of reassuring to the frightened, bewildered, half-mad doctor, who, wrenching himself free, plunged over the rail.

"Man overboard!" cried the helmsman.

"Man overboard!" echoed from every quarter of the frigate, and while Shubrick's short, sharp order to "Lower away the gig!" was being obeyed, Alwyn had as quickly hove to.

The Constitution was running before an eight-knot breeze, and the water was rather rough at the time of the doctor's mad plunge over the taffrail, so that, quickly as the orders to heave to, and lower the fast-rowing gig could be, and were, obeyed, the chances were all against the drowning man, but long before this was accomplished there was a second cry:

"Man overboard!"

This time, however, it was a boy—Midshipman Cooper, who had gone to the aid of the rapidly-disappearing doctor.

On hearing the second warning cry, Shubrick and Alwyn both looked for the cause—the latter uttering an angry and decidedly profane assertion, to the effect that all hands were going crazy.

"It's th' new midshipman, sir!" cried the man at the wheel.

With an exclamation half-angry, half-alarm-

ed, Shubrick snatched up a loose grating [made of wooden bars] and springing aft, threw it after the plucky midshipman.

The latter had waited only long enough to pull off his tight jacket, and kick off his low, silver-buckled shoes, before going to the rescue of his messmate [surgeons' mates and midshipmen formerly messed together], and being—as it proved—an expert swimmer, gained rapidly on the struggling doctor, until, as the boat was leaving the frigate, they were only a few feet apart.

"Courage, doctor!" cried Dick, as he drew near. "Keep up for a few minutes—there's a boat down by this time!"

Doctor Forreau made no response, and deceived by this into thinking the former was wisely saving his strength, as instructed, the midshipman drew alongside him, directing:

"Put one hand on my shoulder, but don't hold too tight!"

"Let go!" he shouted the next instant. "Let go, I say! You'll drown both of us!"

But (as is usually the case under such circumstances) the doctor's only response was to tighten his clutch on the middy's neck and shoulder, and both were very quickly in a fair way of being drowned.

Those in the rapidly-approaching gig, as well as almost all on board the frigate, understood what had happened, and what soon was more than likely to happen.

"By the Eternal!" cried Alwyn, half-rising in the stern-sheets of the boat. "That lad'll be drowned before our very eyes! Pull, lads, pull!"

"Good heavens! They'll be too late—that cursed fool is drowning the boy!" declared Shubrick about the same time, as glass in hand, he stood on the poop of the frigate.

"I'm afraid you are right— Yes! There they sink together!" exclaimed the captain, and as he spoke the struggling pair disappeared beneath the surface.

CHAPTER IV.

A QUEER SUPERSTITION.

WHEN the brave young midshipman and the cowardly doctor sunk beneath the waves the gig was but fifty yards distant, and the lieutenant groaned as he saw them go down.

Still, hoping against hope, the boat was urged onward, and a minute later the crew were startled by a joyous exclamation from Alwyn, followed by:

"They're up again! Bend to it, boys—jump her!"

The men obeyed with a will, and in less time than it takes to record it, both Dick and the doctor were pulled from the grating that Shubrick had flung after the former.

Both rescuer and rescued were unconscious, and nothing could be learned until they recovered, but it was noted by all, and with great surprise, too, that it was Dick who, grasping the grating with one hand, was holding on to the doctor with the other.

"Don't understand how he got loose," soliloquized Alwyn.

"Might've managed t' give him a kick, sir," suggested one of the seamen.

The lieutenant shook his head doubtfully.

"No," said he, "the lad must have been too weak for that. More likely the lad sunk purposely to get rid of him, and then when the grating floated by caught him again."

Alwyn's conjecture covered almost exactly what had happened, for when the plucky middy found his warning appeal unheeded, and saw that both would be sacrificed to the unreasoning fear of the doctor, he deliberately relaxed all effort to get free, allowing himself to sink.

The doctor, finding his support sinking, and having sense enough to realize that the lad might have become unconscious, soon let go his hold, and just as the grating came along Dick rose to the surface.

As the boy came up, the man went down—more as the result of the push he had given the former when releasing him than anything else, and for a moment Dick felt inclined to leave him to his fate, but putting aside this (perfectly justifiable) feeling and thrusting his foot under the doctor's arm-pit, drew him near enough to grasp his sleeve, and thus they were found.

"And why did you trust yourself a second time within range of the cur?" half-angrily demanded Shubrick, when Dick had recovered and gone through a series of congratulatory-admiring interviews with all the officers, from Captain Bainbridge to Midshipman Warren.

"Oh, it was safe enough—nothing to deserve all this praise, sir. With one hand on the grat-

ing, I had both legs free, and could kick him off if he tried to come closer."

They had left the gun-room, and were ascending the companion-ladder at the time this modest disclaimer was being uttered, and as it was finished appeared on the main deck, where, notwithstanding Dick's opinion of his daring act, his appearance for duty (while the doctor had taken to his berth) was greeted with cheers.

"That wasn't the wisest thing ye could have done—savin' that lubber," observed the boatswain to Dick that evening.

"Why, Mr. Bolt?" asked the midshipman, wondering at the grave tone in which this strange assertion was made.

"Well, I dunno as I can say—exactly," replied the grizzled old seaman, speaking slowly and cautiously, and turning his quid a couple times before continuing:

"But I ginerally wants t' know my man, before I'd go off the ship for him."

"What! Let a man perish because he happens to be a stranger?"

"Well, Mr. Cooper, I won't say ag'in' it ashore, but at sea ye'll find it means trouble. The man ye save is always gettin' foul o' ye."

Several old salts standin' near nodded approval, and the boatswain gravely added:

"I got foul of a cuss when I wor a youngster, but *fortnity* he got shot before I got any worse luck than four dozen [lashes] for him." (!)

There was a general stir among the seamen, and all crowded around when Dick smilingly asked:

"How did it happen, Mr. Bolt?"

"Oh, it warn't no laffin' matter, Mr. Cooper," was the reproving reply. "Discipline ain't now like it wor in them days—an' our cap'n bated me anyhow."

"Well, this here land-lubber went over just like t'other one done t'-day, an' I pulled him out, but it wor heavy weather, an' I took t' me berth for the night."

"Next mornin' I wor off the sick-list, an' soon as the cap'n heard of it, the hands were turned up an' the gratin's rigged for punishment."

"What for?" says I, when he ordered me t' strip. 'Are ye goin' t' flog a man for savin' another?'"

"No, sir! for quittin' the ship without leave," says he—an' I got the four dozen, but next day we fell in with an English sloop-of-war, an' the other chap, by *good luck*, had his bloody head carried away." (!)

Murmurs of indignation and sympathy, from all save the middy, followed the ending of this strange story, which was told with every appearance of sincerity, but Dick felt inclined to laugh, and could not repress a smile.

"Laugh away!" growled the boatswain. "Laugh away! But look out for squalls through that same man ye saved from Davy Jones's locker! You've robbed the sea of a man—look out it don't claim you instead!"

Again the sailors nodded approval, and again the midshipman smiled—and laughed outright as he turned to go below, but before the week was out, he felt as if there *might* be some truth in the boatswain's words.

The morning after the "bath" the first person Dick met was the doctor, whom he saluted with a cheerful:

"Good-morning, sir! How do you feel after your dip?"

The doctor belied the character for politeness which is granted without question to Frenchmen, and after a momentary but none the less unpleasant stare, passed on with the cool reply:

"Quite well."

"Well, that is cool!" observed Dick, looking in comical amazement after the retreating form of the doctor.

"I should say so," laughingly commented some one at the middy's elbow, and turning quickly he saw Warren—the youngest midshipman on board—a brave, bright-faced little fellow.

"Don't speak of it," cautioned Dick, "he may not be feeling as well as he says, or may think I was one of his tormentors."

"I don't know about that, for Garret, who was the leader in yesterday's fun, told him in a joking way that the mess was going to present me with a leather medal for saving the caterer from drowning."

"We began the fun, you know, by electing him caterer in place of Garret," added Warren, smiling broadly.

"No, I did not know," returned the other, absently. "How did it end—the medal question?"

"End? Why, it ended right there, for the gallipot gentleman [the doctor] promptly in-

formed Garret that the man (?) who saved him was not present.

"Another thing, Mr. Cooper—"

"Dick, if you please," interrupted Mr. Cooper. "All right! My maiden name is Harry."

"Well, Dick—Dandy Dick, we've christened you—there's another thing you ought to know, and that is that this fellow actually doubted that your name was Cooper—still more so, that you were not *much* older than your humble servant."

"That came out—your age, I mean—when he said you must be about eighteen; that he had seen you in France as long ago as that, but although he laughed it off afterward, I could see he meant it."

The shrill whistle of the boatswain's call to breakfast, interrupted the conversation at this point, and it was not resumed afterward, although while at the mess-table, Warren made several pointed remarks regarding Cooper's youthful appearance—considering his real age (?).

Dick's eyes were on the surgeon's mate during all the time they were at breakfast, but the latter paid no attention to Warren's sarcastic remarks—did not appear to hear them.

And so it continued until the Constitution and Hornet arrived off San Salvador, where Lawrence went in, and finding an enemy's cruiser of equal force, remained there, while "Old Ironsides" continued along the coast to the southward.

The Constitution parted company with the Hornet on the 26th of December, and at mess that noon Warren remarked:

"It's about time we had some of Shubrick's luck—the Hornet's stolen our share of it this time."

"By the way," continued the little middy, speaking in a loud tone, though Cooper, whom he was addressing, sat next him, "by the way, Dick, have you ever received any acknowledgment of your services in pulling the Doc out o' the deep?"

"It's nearly six weeks, now, isn't it?"

Midshipmen, taken "all in all," as Bolt was in the habit of saying, "are a rum lot."

Every one at the table, including the mischievous speaker, knew perfectly well that the surgeon's mate made a point of avoiding Cooper, and of speaking to him only when absolutely necessary, and that the subject referred to had never been mentioned, but that only added to their enjoyment of the embarrassment of the doctor.

Although Dick had perceived that the surgeon's mate had little love for him, and was beginning to put some faith in Bolt's assertion that the former would yet make trouble, he was indifferent to the first, and fearless of the other. So, with a careless laugh, he replied:

"Come now, Harry! You know how long ago it is, just as well as I do. As for acknowledgment—you also know that I've been overloaded with it. From the 'old man' down, *everybody* had somethin' to say about the trifling thing I did. So, sir"—with assumed sternness—"you will oblige me by saying no more about it; such *trifles* are not worth mentioning." (!)

"Je-u—piter!" commented Harry.

"Do you mean to insinuate that *our doctor's* death would be a trifling matter?" bullied Garret, from the head of the table.

"Well, no—not exactly," was the cool reply. "But let me remind you, Mr. Garret, first, that I was not addressing you, and, second, that to insure personal comfort, it will be wise to confine your conversation to those whom you are certain will enjoy it."

"I want the subject dropped!"

A dead silence followed this order. All eyes—except the doctor's—were fixed on Garret, and for a minute he appeared inclined to rebel, but, although over six weeks had elapsed, he had not forgotten his first meeting with Dandy Dick Cooper, and the erstwhile bully of the berth remained silent.

The surgeon's mate—except for a red spot on either cheek—seemed totally unaware of, or indifferent to, what was going on, but Warren was determined to "have him out of his hole," as he said, and began:

"I say, Mr. Fouroar (Forrean)—"

"Sail ho! Sail ho!" came echoing through the ship, and forgetting the doctor, the speaker was first on deck.

CHAPTER V.

COMMANDER TOM WHITE.

"Two strange sail, inshore and to windward," observed Warren, as soon as he had learned the

occasion of the hail; "now the 'spell' is beginning to work."

"What do you mean?" asked Dick.

"Why, Shubrick's luck, of course! Haven't you heard of it, yet? Bet you a copper we're at it inside of no time!"

The officers within hearing smiled as the volatile lad rattled off this rather vague prediction, although secretly placing no little faith in the *luck* supposed to follow the ship fortunate enough to carry Fighting Jack Shubrick.

After a little maneuvering, one of the vessels began closing, while the other stood on slowly toward San Salvador, and Captain Bainbridge felt quite happy, for he was now satisfied that he had an English frigate fairly within his reach.

"No doubt of it, eh, Parker?" he said to the first lieutenant.

"I think not, sir—though she's French built."

They were standing on the quarter-deck, as were nearly all the other officers, watching the stranger, some with glasses—others without.

Cooper and Warren had, with their comrades, come up a few minutes before, and as Parker expressed his belief in the correctness of the captain's opinion, the younger middy was heard expressing his belief in Shubrick's luck.

Before the smile caused by this had died away, Dick was heard replying:

"That's a very safe bet, Harry, my boy, for you may rest assured that there is just as little chance of the Java avoiding us, as there is of Old Ironsides lowering her jack to a piccaroon."

Captain Bainbridge and his three lieutenants—Alwyn was forward—turned and stared in amazement at the speaker, but the two midshipmen were engrossed in the stranger, Dick with the glass to his eye, and Harry staring at him much as the senior officers were.

"What do you mean? How the deuce do you know what ship it is?" demanded the latter, asking the very question the captain was about to put.

"Oh, I know her well enough," assured Dick, moving his glass from one vessel to the other. "I was all over her the last time I was cruising along the English coast—before I sold my schooner, you know."

The last explanatory statement caused almost as much astonishment as the announcement of the name of the advancing vessel, but there was more to follow.

"Yes," continued Dick, his glass roving back to the frigate. "Yes, it's the Java, sure enough. She was the *La Renommée*, before she was captured from the French—carries forty-nine carriage-guns and between four and five hundred men."

"Mr. Cooper!" called Captain Bainbridge, and, as the midshipman advanced and saluted—

"Are you merely romancing regarding that frigate, or is she really the Java, and is she manned and armed as you have declared?"

"It is really the Java, sir, and what I have stated regarding her is true, or was, when I was on board of her at Portsmouth, six months ago."

This assurance was uttered calmly, and so positively that Captain Bainbridge, who was well-versed in English naval affairs, felt certain that, surprising as it might be, his midshipman's information was correct.

"He is certainly a most extraordinary lad," commented the captain, speaking in a low tone, and was about to dismiss Dick, when the latter exclaimed:

"There go two men off the prize!"

"What prize? What do you mean, sir?" demanded the captain, turning hastily toward the frigate and her late consort.

"That schooner, sir, looks like a prize."

"Eh? Bless me! but the lad continues to improve!" exclaimed the captain.

"Damma, sir, but he'll be running the ship for us!" asserted Alwyn, who had been standing within ear-shot for the last few minutes.

The junior lieutenant had himself seen the two men jumping from the schooner, and, addressing the captain, asked:

"Shall we bear down, sir?"

"Yes, yes! Do so at once!"

Alwyn immediately gave the necessary orders, and the Constitution, which had been drawing the enemy off the land, hauled up her mainsail, took in her royals, and tacked toward the stranger, cutting in between the latter and the swimmers.

After surveying the situation for a few minutes the captain ordered:

"Keep everything aloft, ready for use, Mr. Parker, and close with him, royals crossed!"

"Lower away the gig there, and pick up

Fighting Jack's Middies.

those men! Mr. Cooper, you take charge of the boat!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the prompt and hearty response from both officers.

And as the first lieutenant turned away to attend to the ship, the midshipman hurried to look after the boat.

Noted as the American seamen then were for the extraordinary rapidity of their movements, in less time than it takes to record it the Constitution was put about and bearing down to meet the stranger, while the gig, under command of the proud young midshipman, was dashing away to meet the swimmers.

Ordinarily, one of the cutters would have been lowered for the latter service, but, under the existing circumstances, the fast-rowing gig was the boat for the occasion, and the big, brave captain—like Shubrick, he stood six-feet high and was most beautifully proportioned—the man to direct it to be used.

As the gig left the frigate Captain Bainbridge gave the order to beat to quarters.

He had a slight impediment in his speech, and when the stranger was about a half-mile distant, and to windward of Old Ironsides, having showed no colors except a jack, ordered:

"Set out colors, Mr. Parker, and give him a gun!"

This order, given merely to induce the stranger to set an ensign, was misunderstood, and produced a whole broadside from the Constitution.

Scarcely a minute elapsed before the stranger returned the compliment and had an English ensign floating from each mast-head.

This was the signal for the commencement of a furious cannonading on both sides, and as it commenced, the gig returned to the Constitution carrying three wet jackets—one of them blood-stained.

It was the blood-stained jacket—or rather the blood-stained coat of a commander—that caused Captain Bainbridge (whose sole thought was the successful handling of his ship), to direct that the wearer, if able, should come to him on the poop.

"Certainly, I am able!" exclaimed the wearer of the blood-stained coat when Harry, who was with the captain, delivered the message of the latter, adding:

"Though it is entirely owing to this gentleman," indicating Cooper, "that I am able to do so."

The speaker was a strikingly bold, fearless-looking fellow, whose flashing black eyes, almost square jaw, and firm mouth and chin, warned even the casual observer that he was one whom it were as well not to interfere with; but, notwithstanding his semi-naval commander's coat, and athletic figure, it was equally evident that he had not yet attained his majority!

"So I supposed," returned Harry; "I was watching, and saw Dick dive as you sunk—but the captain awaits you."

"Well, I reckon Tom White's not the man to keep him waitin' for long," observed the second stranger, adding, in an explanatory way:

"Knows his duty too well for that."

"Let's go aft, sir."

Tom White, as his companion had designated him, smiled and nodded assent, and Harry led the way to where Captain Bainbridge stood on the poop, directing the movements of the famous old frigate.

Both vessels were eager for battle, and closing rapidly, each maneuvering to rake and to avoid being raked.

"Enemy's about to wear!" warned Alwyn, from the main-deck, as Warren and the rescued men approached the captain.

"Bear down in his wake!" cried the captain.

"Starboard your helm! Hands by the lee-braces—fore-and-main—clew garnets!"

"Ease off—let fall!"

"Haul on board fore-and-main tacks!"

"Main-deck quarters, below there! Stand by the larboard broadside—ready to rake the enemy's stern!"

As these orders came ringing in trumpet-like tones from Bainbridge's lips, he darted an occasional glance at the youthful wearer of a commander's uniform.

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the first lieutenant, as his captain ceased.

All the old commodores and captains were especially severe on any departure from the precise uniform which an officer's rank entitled him to wear—Preble once going to the length of chasing a Sicilian officer ashore—and Bainbridge paused in giving his orders long enough to sternly demand:

"What does *this* mean, sir?"—touching the youth's sleeve, and then continued:

"On the quarter-deck! Stand by the larboard broadside!"

"Cool and steady, my lads! Don't—throw—away—one—shot!"

Pausing again, the captain looked expectantly at the youth, and the latter calmly explained:

"I was commander of yonder vessel, which was a prize to the Java."

CHAPTER VI.

THE JAVA AND OLD IRONSIDES.

THE surprising explanation of the youth who had been designated as Tom White, was lost in the excitement and confusion created by the loss of the wheel of the Constitution, which was struck and carried away by a shot from the Java.

This misfortune, serious as it was, was not all the mischief done by the shot, for a small bolt, knocked out of the wheel, was driven into the captain's thigh, and at almost the same moment, a musket-ball struck him in the hip.

"Hit bad, sir?" asked White, catching the captain, as the latter staggered under the double blow.

When a frigate's wheel is gone, the tiller worked by tackles below the decks, making most awkward—and, in the presence of an enemy, exceedingly dangerous—work, since the men who do it are unable to see the sails, and the orders are transmitted by a line of midshipmen, or a tube fitted for that express purpose.

No man could more quickly and thoroughly appreciate the seriousness of the evil which had befallen his ship, than Captain Bainbridge, and instead of answering the youth's question, he cried:

"Ready there, with your boarders, Mr. Parker!"

"Starboard, and run him aboard!"

"Away there, you boarders, away! Heave with your grappels, men, heave!"

"Meet her with the helm! Hard down! Meet her, I say! Steady—so!"

Regardless of his two painful wounds (which soon afterward threatened his life), Captain Bainbridge, limping back and forth on the poop, mindful only of the disabled condition of Old Ironsides, and that the stronger-manned enemy could out-manuever him in the light winds, the brave commander had determined to avoid the danger by immediately closing with the quick-moving Englishman.

To close with the Java, Bainbridge had to risk being raked, but he cared little for that, serious as it was, compared to the danger involved in allowing the enemy to play at their favorite game of "long bowls," that is, firing at long range, and disabling the opposing ship before attempting to rake, or close with her.

Having set her courses, the Constitution luffed up close to the wind, and opened on the Java, thus bringing matters to a crisis, for finding the fire of the all-conquering old frigate now too heavy to be sustained, the Englishman made no effort to avoid closing, but the crippled condition of the American prevented the ships from coming together in a way to suit Bainbridge's ideas, so for three hours and a quarter they ran almost continually side by side, exchanging murderously short-range broadsides.

History gives the result of the fight, but aside from the doings of the principal officers, has space for little more than the fact that at the end of three hours the English frigate had nothing except a few stumps of her masts and spars left standing, while the American was, actually, just as she had gone into action—royal yards across, and every spar in its place!

The Java's guns now were silenced, her ensign down, and boarding his tacks, Bainbridge luffed up across her bows, gaining a position ahead and to windward, to repair damages.

This last occupied only a short time, and then the crippled but still conquering Constitution wore around intending to cross the enemy's fore-foot, but plainly seeing the utter hopelessness of further resistance, and unwilling to sacrifice—uselessly—his men, the commander of the Java hauled down the jack, which had been flying at the stump of his mizzenmast.

Here ends the historical, but we must go back to the beginning to follow the doings of our people during the action.

During the early part of the engagement, when Captain Bainbridge first attempted to close, the jibboom of the Java got foul of the Constitution's mizzen rigging, and then our boys began to shine.

At the very beginning almost of the firing, as the vessels came together, rough and ready, bold and fearless Alwyn, while directing the battery that held the eager enemy in check, fell to the deck, wounded in a half-dozen places by a discharge of musketry.

Shubrick was below on the gun-deck when this happened (and, with his customary good fortune, remaining unhurt while men were falling all around him); Parker was—under his captain's supervision—busy with the ship, and, almost unconsciously, the commander sent his new recruits to the "slaughter-house"—the midship division of the main-deck guns.

"You, sir," he said to White, "go to the aid of Mr. Alwyn—assist him in handling the midship division!"

As if one of the regular officers of the ship, and thoroughly accustomed to the duty, the youthful "ex-commander" bowed and turned away, to assist the sadly hurt junior lieutenant. "Make any use o' me, sir?" asked the youth's gigantic companion, adding:

"Used t' be cap'n o' the maintop here, sir."

"Eh? Oh! You're an old man-o'-war's-man, are ye?"

"Ay, ay, sir! I served durin' the little trouble with Tripoli."

"Very good! Go to the midship division—What's your name?"

"Maxwell, sir."

"Yes, yes! I think I remember ye—get along!"

The brawny seaman had barely reached his quarters, when Alwyn was removed to the cockpit, and the command of the division fell upon White.

Handling his guns and directing the men with all the coolness and skill of a veteran, the young commander quickly inspired confidence in those under him, and almost as quickly shot away the entangled jib-boom of the Java—as well as her foremast—thus freeing the vessels.

"Well done, sir!" commented Bainbridge, as he passed forward among the men at the batteries.

White raised his cap and bowed, but made no other response, and the captain's eye happening to fall upon Midshipman Cooper, he sharply inquired:

"What are you doing here, sir? Why are you not in line with the others?"

("The others" were the line of midshipmen engaged in transmitting the steering orders.)

"There were more than enough without me, sir, and Mr. Parker thought I could be of more service here," replied Cooper.

"As you see, sir," added White, "the 'slaughter-house' has not belied its character. We would have been short-handed but for this young gentleman."

"Short-handed! What service could this boy be?" demanded the irritated, suffering captain.

"His last shot carried away the Java's foremast," was the dry response.

The captain stared a minute, as if half doubting this statement, and then passed on among the men.

A few minutes after this, the Constitution wore around and took a position across the bows of the Java, intending to rake that vessel, but the striking of the latter's flag obviated this.

"I hear you've been distinguishing yourself, my lad!" exclaimed Shubrick, coming on deck immediately after the engagement was over.

The big lieutenant slapped the little middy on the back as he spoke, and then looked inquiringly at White.

"And you appear to have astonished the 'old man,'" he added, addressing the latter. "We on the gun-deck have been left entirely in the shade, according to him."

The middy smiled—the other bowed, and doffed his cap, but neither spoke, for Captain Bainbridge called at the moment, and, as in duty bound, Fighting Jack instantly responded.

Shubrick was wanted to go aboard the prize, and on his return reported the vessel to be the Java, rated as a 38, commanded by Captain Lambert.

The English captain had been badly wounded—so badly that he died immediately after the arrival of the ship at San Salvador, where an interesting interview took place between the two commanders. Bainbridge came to the cot of his late adversary supported on one side by Shubrick, on the other by Hoffman, to take leave of the dying man, and restore to him his sword. The American captain's reckless disregard of his own wounds nearly cost him his life, and his illness prevented any inquiry regarding White and Maxwell.

CHAPTER VII.

TRANSFERRED TO THE "HORNET."

ALTHOUGH there had been no official inquiry regarding White and Maxwell, there had been considerable private talk, as well as much admiring and wondering comment over the escape of the strangers from the prize, and the work the first named and midshipman Cooper performed during the action.

Among the men, opinion was divided as to which—Cooper or White—was entitled to the greatest praise, while the officers were fully as admiring, and more ready in applauding the two youths.

Young Warren, too, came in for a share of the commendation so freely awarded to the others, having proved himself as fearless as any of the dauntless fellows of the gallant old frigate, and more intelligent than a great many who had served longer.

"Them three youngsters 'll make their mark, you can depend upon it," observed Bolt, the boatswain, while he and most of the men were lounging around the fore-castle, resting from the labor of the first day's work of refitting at San Salvador.

"That's no more'n any Tom, Dick or Harry that'd fall in the mud would do," commented the joking young captain of the foretop, but seeing the old boatswain (who resented this familiarity) frown, added:

"But, I say, Mr. Bolt, that warn't your 'pinion t'other day, when the doctor was pulled out o' water by one o' the three."

"Ay, ay, Billy my lad, ye'r' runnin' on another tack entirely," said the master's mate, grinning his approval of the topman's remark.

"Of course, I am," sharply retorted Bolt, "'cause why—Mr. Cooper's pulled out two more since then, an' I'll bet my prize money one o' 'em 'll do for the ugly lookin' doctor."

"The lad's had a big hand in savin' the three, an' the last two'll be more'n a match for the first one," added the boatswain, speaking thoughtfully, and as if the subject under discussion was of the gravest importance.

The master's mate was a very irreverent fellow, with very little superstition in his composition, and being a somewhat important personage could afford to, and did, laugh at the boatswain's words—which none of the others would have dared to do, even if so inclined, though it must be confessed that all the older seamen shared Bolt's opinion regarding the misfortune attending the rescue of a man from drowning.

"Laugh away, Mr. Mate!" growled the old tar. "Laugh away, but just mark my words: there'll be a death atween them four afore long!"

"Well, I can't say I'm in love with the cut of the Frenchman's jib," admitted the mate, as, tiring of the subject, he walked aft.

"No more am I, nor the way he looks at that jolly little gentleman, Mr. Cooper," added the captain of the foretop.

"Right, my lad!" approved the boatswain. "An' it just confirms what I've said, for ye must've noticed that the Frenchman's aferd t' look that other young gentleman [White] in the face."

"Though he's always a-watchin' the three—more especially Mr. Cooper and Mr. White," affirmed the topman.

The arrival of Shubrick on deck at that moment, and his call for the boatswain, put an end to the conversation, which has been detailed to give the reader an idea of the feeling existing among the crew of the frigate regarding the two midshipmen, White, and the doctor.

Among the officers, Forrean's strange avoidance—to give it no harsher name—of the youth who had so gallantly gone to his rescue, had also been remarked, though but little was said of it, for Shubrick's luck, which it would seem was now beginning to be rated against that of the Constitution herself, furnished a topic at once interesting and irritating—the reason being that the big lieutenant was about to leave the frigate.

Lieutenant Ballard was anxious to get into the Constitution, hoping she might have another fight on her way home, while Lawrence was more than willing to take Shubrick in exchange, trusting the latter would bring his usual good fortune, and certain he would bring his good conduct.

When the exchange was finally arranged, there was no little dissatisfaction extending from the ward-room to the fore-castle, for the custom of "borrowing" Fighting Jack had not yet become fairly established, though, aside from the question of "luck," every commander was glad to have so skillful a seaman and so brave an officer in his ship.

When the question of exchange was finally decided, and about to be effected, the slumbering discontent broke forth at the midshipmen's mess.

"All right! If Mr. Shubrick's going, I'm going too!" exclaimed Dick, when the news was announced at the table, adding:

"I'm only borrowed anyhow, and I'm going to ask Captain Lawrence to get me back."

"And what about me? Can't you manage it so that I can go with you?" eagerly asked Warren.

"And what shall you do?" continued the little fellow, turning to White, between whom and himself and Cooper a strong friendship had sprung up, beginning almost from the moment they had met each other.

White (who, by the by, it had been learned was, notwithstanding his athletic form and manly appearance, but eighteen) smiled at the anxiety displayed by Warren.

"As you know, I am a free agent," he answered, "and can go where I please, but am really worse off than my friend Maxwell, for having been an officer—in a sense—I do not care to go before the mast, while he can—yet, my object in visiting these waters has been defeated through losing my schooner, and I am at a loss to know what to do with myself."

"Stay with us!" came a chorus of voices, for, with the exception of Forrean and Garret, all had been taken with the bold, frank speaker, and of these two, the midshipman's dislike (if it deserved that term) was more the effect of White's liking for Cooper than anything else.

Forrean, on the other hand, appeared to both dislike and fear White, but the latter, like Cooper, appeared to be either indifferent to, or unconscious of, the former's ill-concealed feelings.

"No, no!" protested White, Cooper, and Warren, in the same breath, and the last-named gave the reason when he added:

"We stay or go together."

"Well, I'm going with Mr. Shubrick," decided Cooper, "and as you must go with me, Captain Lawrence shall arrange for you."

The positive way in which this assertion was made, caused an almost general smile, but Dick obtaining leave to visit the Hornet that evening, the truth of his words was proved by an order from Captain Bainbridge directing the transfer of Cooper and Warren to Lawrence's ship, and an invitation for White and Maxwell to accompany them.

The official notice of the transfer was brought by the orderly midshipman attending Captain Bainbridge on shore, just before the boatswain piped to breakfast, and Dick's influence with the young and famous Lawrence, created a fresh and astonishing topic of conversation at the various mess-tables.

The Constitution was to sail that day for Boston for repairs—her condition, now, being very rotten—and among the officers much surprise was expressed because Dick and the others did not care to return in her, while among the crew there was a general feeling of regret at the prospect of losing the gallant boys, but the boatswain expressed the opinion of the old hands when he said:

"I'm as sorry as any o' ye t' lose the lads, but they're safer out o' the ship while that pizen-faced son-of-a-sea-cook is in her!"—meaning, of course, Doctor Forrean.

White, Cooper and Warren left the frigate immediately after breakfast, Maxwell following shortly after in the boat carrying their traps.

About four bells in the afternoon watch (2 P.M.) Captain Bainbridge came aboard the Constitution, with Lieutenant Ballard, and his orderly midshipman, and a few minutes after the party had reached the cabin, the first lieutenant appeared on deck to give the usual orders to get under way.

"All hands up anchor, ahoy!"

"Man the capstan-bars!"

"Nipper! Heave away!"

In a very few minutes all these orders were fulfilled, and when Captain Bainbridge appeared on the quarter-deck, Parker was ready to report:

"We are short, sir,"—(meaning that the cable was straight up and down).

"Very good—set your topsails!"

The canvas was instantly dropped, and it was no sooner stretched to the yards than force was applied to the halyards, and the sails hoisted.

"Cast the ship to seaward!" continued the captain, and when the headyards had been braced aback in the proper direction, and all reported ready to get under way, asked:

"Has that—that doctor left us, yet?"

"No, sir; but this shore boat approaching us must be for him."

"Very likely. As soon as he's gone, trip the anchor at once, and when it's stowed, and the decks cleared, report to me."

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded the busy agent of all work, and as the captain turned toward the cabin, ordered:

"Pass the word for Doctor Forrean to get his traps on deck—boat's coming for him!"

Five minutes after, the doctor and his "traps" had been rather unceremoniously bundled into the boat referred to, and was being pulled ashore, while the Constitution was standing out to sea.

"It looks durned queer an' I don't like it, though I can't say as I'm sorry the leaden-faced lubber is gone," remarked Bolt that evening at mess on the Constitution.

About the same time, Warren came down to the midshipmen's mess on the Hornet looking somewhat excited.

"I say, Dick!" he called to Cooper who was sitting opposite. "Who do you think's just come on board? Make the wildest guess you can."

Dick laughed and shook his head.

"No use," he said, "not enough of a Yankee for that."

"Well, it's your old friend—the doctor!"

The little middy's tone and manner indicated that he expected his friend to be struck dumb with amazement on hearing this, but the latter only smiled and asked:

"Well, Harry, what's wonderful about that?"

"Oh, nothing, of course! But don't you forget Bolt's warning, or there may be," was the half-angry retort.

CHAPTER VIII.

TO COAX A COY ENGLISHMAN.

AS has been stated in another chapter, Lawrence, in the Hornet, had remained lying off San Salvador blockading an English cruiser, which he had discovered on arriving in company with the Constitution, but had been unable, as yet, to coax the enemy out of the neutral port.

At the time of the Constitution's departure, Lawrence was lying close inshore, taking off stores and water, and as usual making every show of weakness to induce the Bonne Citoyenne (which was of equal force), to follow him outside.

"Why not send a few good talkers ashore, and talk him out?" suggested Shubrick, as with Lawrence, he stood on the quarter-deck, gazing at the enemy.

"How?" asked the captain, in astonishment.

"Well, let them brag a little—and keep at it. Say we're tired of waiting for such a cowardly crowd, and are going to look for some of their more plucky merchantmen. Then, after a day or two, run off, and I'll bet he falls into the trap."

"Very nicely arranged," commented Lawrence, smilingly, "but you fail to provide for his slipping away entirely, for unless we run out of sight of land, he will not come out."

"I haven't overlooked that contingency, sir. There are plenty of light, quick sailing-boats to be hired, and four or five of those, stationed a few miles apart, with a few of us to signal her movements—with guns by day and rockets by night—could easily keep us so well advised as to make escape impossible."

"An excellent idea!" exclaimed Lawrence, and then speaking thoughtfully and more to himself than the lieutenant:

"Who shall I send? It will require keen wits to avoid suspicion in spreading this story, and engaging and manning the sail-boats."

"I'll manage the affair," quietly assured Shubrick. "Give me those three youngsters, and the seaman who came on board to-day, and I'll engage to handle the whole affair."

"We'll go ashore as ship's boy and sailors," explained the big lieutenant, "and each one can direct a boat. They're all sharp, fully capable, and more important than all, are unknown ashore as officers."

"By Jove! Jack, you're a jewel!"

"Come below, and we'll arrange the signals. It's sure to succeed!"

The captain turned as he spoke, and grasping Shubrick's arm, led the way below. Their acquaintance was of long standing, and it was two friends—not captain and lieutenant—that descended to the cabin.

The conference between the two officers lasted until evening, everything being carefully arranged, every possible contingency provided for—except one—and as the hands were piped to supper, the captain arose, saying:

"I think everything—every chance—has been

Fighting Jack's Middies.

provided for, so, as soon as you've dined with me, make your arrangements for going ashore."

"Thank you, sir; I'll attend to it at once, for I think we had better get there as soon as possible."

As Shubrick left the cabin, a midshipman entered to announce:

"Gentleman from ashore, sir, with letter from Captain Bainbridge."

This was strange—almost startling—intelligence, and deep as the famous young captain was engaged in thought, he roused up instantly, ordering the midshipman to admit the visitor.

Shubrick, meanwhile, had gone to the ward-room, and summoning a master's mate, ordered him to provide clothing and arms suitable for the trip ashore.

By the time supper was finished, Shubrick's preparations were completed, and summoning those whom he had chosen to accompany and assist him, the lieutenant informed them of what was intended to be done, and the part to be played by each.

"Now, gentlemen," he concluded, "it's not particularly hazardous or glorious work; neither is it particularly pleasant, and if any of you dislike it, do not hesitate to say so."

All four of his picked men stared first in astonishment, and after a moment or two, as if amused.

"Excuse me, sir," said White, "but these gentlemen"—indicating Dick and Harry—"understand your humor better than I, of course, so I presume you are jesting, for we naturally must feel honored by your selection."

As the bold-looking youth finished, he began to remove his coat, and without a word the others followed his example.

"Very well, gentlemen," commended Shubrick, "jesting or not, I'm happy to find I was not mistaken in my men."

His tone was so earnest, that even Maxwell (who rivaled the big lieutenant in size and strength, if not in graceful proportions), felt stirred, and they hurried their preparations.

In a short time all were ready, and Shubrick (who made a fine looking mate for Maxwell), gave his final warning:

"Now, remember, lads, that we are no longer officers of any rank, and the only respect or obedience Maxwell or I may expect from you, is that usually accorded by ship's boys to seamen, which I need not tell you is just as much as can be knocked, or coaxed out of them."

"Now, if you are ready, we'll go to the captain—he'll like to have a look at us before we start."

"It will not be necessary for you to come, Maxwell—you see if Vance has the boat ready."

"Ay, ay, sir; I'll tend to it!" responded Maxwell, and leaving him to find the master's mate, the others followed Shubrick to the cabin.

As the party reached the quarter-deck, a man in uniform, coming from the cabin, passed them with a sharp look, and a smothered exclamation of surprise escaped him as the cabin lights fell upon the faces of Shubrick and his companions.

Of the four, Warren only recognized the man as Doctor Forreau, and he was too angry over Cooper's indifference to the Frenchman's presence, to say anything.

Maxwell, having ascertained that one of the cutters was in readiness to go ashore, now came up and stood at the lee gangway, and on seeing him, Forreau passed over to the weather side.

"Well, good luck to you, boys! If you succeed in coaxing the Britisher out of his hole, you'll all be captains!" laughingly declared Lawrence, as the party came on deck.

"Oh, ho!" muttered Forreau. "So that's what's going on, is it? Well, I'll see about it."

He was moving forward while speaking, and was below when the boat was pushing off, so he missed seeing that Maxwell (whose appearance was not suspicious) formed one of the "coaxing" party.

To prevent any suspicion, a couple of boats followed the first cutter—at intervals of a half-hour—and brought off some stores for the cabin and ward-room.

When the return of the third cutter was reported, Captain Lawrence directed the midshipman who had been in charge of it to "send down that doctor—Forreau."

In a few minutes the midshipman returned, accompanied by the first lieutenant and another midshipman, who had had charge of the second cutter.

"Both cutters waited in turn for that surgeon's mate, sir, but he's a lubberly sort, and must have missed his course ashore," explained the first lieutenant, adding:

"Of course, he can come off in a shore

boat any time, but ought to be keelhaunched for keeping the men waiting on such a night as this!"

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Stewart," dryly assented the captain: "but how came you to permit him to go ashore at all?"

The captain had looked very much astonished when the lieutenant began talking. It was now the latter's turn to do so, and protest:

"Why, sir, he had your permission to go ashore, to transact some private business for you."

Lawrence was cool, very cool, notwithstanding his impetuous style of fighting, and he received the lieutenant's explanation with a queer smile, but made no remark other than:

"Ah! I understand," and to the midshipmen:

"Thank you—that is all."

But, as soon as the midshipmen were gone, Lawrence's manner changed, and after pacing the floor for several minutes, looking perplexed and uneasy, he asked:

"I suppose you took this fellow's word for it that he had my permission?"

"No, sir, I wouldn't take his word for a rotten lanyard," was the prompt reply, "I saw your name for it."

"Sure it was my writing, Stewart?"

"Positive, sir—to an order to pass bearer ashore at any hour."

"Ah! yes—thank you," and left alone, the captain sat down, looking more troubled than ever.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW IT WORKED.

WHEN the five adventurers landed from the cutter, Shubrick directed their movements until a wine-shop frequented by English-speaking seamen and landmen was reached. Here he divided the party, sending Maxwell—whom he had found intelligent, and well-posted in such work—to engage the sailboats, fixing a time and place for their meeting, and with the three ship's boys entered the wine-shop.

The place was crowded with people of various nationalities besides English, but all appeared to understand what was said when Shubrick in a loud, bragging tone, began:

"Well, lads, I'm glad th' cap'n isn't goin' t' wait no longer for that cowardly Englishman, for we'd never have a copper o' prize money if we waited for him t' come out."

"Ay, ay," said White in the same tone. "There's neither fun nor money in waitin' for that Britisher."

"Less pluck for an Englishman than any I've ever seen or heard of," affirmed Warren.

"We'd have more fun and make more money taking a merchantman," added Cooper, with the air of one who had been through a dozen engagements.

This kind of talk was in itself irritating enough to the Englishmen who were present, if coming from men, but when the taunts were uttered by three ship's boys it became particularly so.

The Frenchmen, the Spaniards, the natives—every one present—appeared to enjoy the joke on the Englishmen, who had many times thrashed all of them, and a French quartermaster in a spirit of mischief, added fuel to the fire by joining the American party, saying:

"Ah, messieurs, it ees a shame! Ze English captain seem to have lost hees—courage—you call it."

"You will have ze vine wiz me, eh?"

"Certainly—NOT!" promptly answered Shubrick. "D'ye think we're goin' t' let a citizen of the country that's our best friend spend any money on us? No, sir! We'll have the wine, but it'll be with us! We've plenty of money, luck—and pluck!"

The character of a braggart was anything but suited to Fighting Jack, and his last words lacked the spirit which should have been given them—so much so that a plucky little English seaman retorted:

"You may have the money, and you may have the luck, but I'll bet a shilling you've not got the pluck!"

It was a bantam defying a shanghai, but before any one could speak White interposed. Wherever he had picked it up, the young ex-commander was a master of the English man-o'-war's-man's style of invective:

"Why," he scornfully began, "you burgos-eating, peasoup-swilling, trowsers-scrubbing son of a sea-cook, you're talkin' to a man who'd eat you and all who're with ye!"

"Now, if you'll just step out on the floor, I'll make ye see more stars than astronomers ever

did, and cut more capers than all the dancing masters in France!"

This was audacious language from a youth of eighteen, to a well-made, though small-sized man of thirty, and Shubrick would have interfered, had it been possible to do so without betraying himself and his companions by exerting his authority, but it was too late, now, for as White finished his challenge, he advanced toward the Englishman, who stepped forward, saying:

"Well, you're a cheeky young rip t' talk so t' a man, and I'll give ye a jolly good hiding just t' teach ye manners."

"Brag's a beautiful dog—to look at," retorted Tom, "but, like you, he can do nothin' more'n bark, for teeth he has none, or if he has any, daren't use 'em."

"There! I told you your teeth were no good," he added a moment later, and to the surprise of everybody the Englishman was knocked down—not only that, but lay in a heap on the floor.

It was more good-luck than anything else—as Tom frankly acknowledged afterward—for, angered by his boyish opponent's language, the English seaman lost his temper and made a blind rush, intending to finish the plucky youth at one swoop. Instead, the latter stepped aside, and as the man passed struck out—throwing his whole weight after his fist. Had he missed, Tom, too, would have gone down, but as it happened he struck what is nowadays called a "knock-out" blow, fetching his opponent full on the neck, under the ear, rendering the latter insensible for several minutes.

Chance, or not, the fall of the English seaman made the boys—and Shubrick, too—more confident in themselves, and before any one could speak, Dick stepped out.

"Come!" he cried, "while we're waiting for your man to pull himself together, I'll give any of you a lesson at anything you please."

"Single stick used to be a favorite exercise in England. Do you—any of you—care to take a lesson?"

This was going further, and chancing more, than Shubrick cared for, but he was spared the trouble of interfering, by a man who had been standing apart from all the others, watching what was going on.

There were about a dozen English seamen and petty officers present, and while the first bantam's (Tom's) challenge was received with some little respect—owing to his size and appearance—the second's for the same reason, excited a mixture of indignation, disgust and ridicule.

"Jack!" called a boatswain's mate to one of the younger seamen, "take that cub by the scruff o' the neck and spank him—sound!"

"That I will, sir!" promptly returned the man, stepping into the circle which had been formed around the late combatants.

The short but decisive fight between Tom and his opponent—preceded, as it was, by the insolent talk regarding the cowardice of the English—had already accomplished Shubrick's purpose, and he had no idea of allowing another of his bantams to slip through his fingers to face a shanghai.

Keeping his eye on the seaman coming toward Dick, the big lieutenant arose with the deliberateness of one who knows he has the game in his own hands, as was indeed the case, for no two ordinary men would have troubled him, and there were enough American sympathizers to prevent any unfairness, but the stranger above referred to obviated any interference on his part.

"Stop!"

As the stranger uttered this command, the angry seaman stood stock-still—as if shot. The word itself came like a shot—like the bang of a gun, and all eyes were instantly turned on the speaker, who was still in the position he had been in from the time the Americans entered—his arms folded across his chest, and leaning with one shoulder against a post outside the crowd.

Although all noted the direction from whence came the stern command, none believed it possible that the man leaning against the post could have uttered it, for while the volume of sound indicated the lungs of a giant, he was scarcely of the average height, or rather the great breadth of his shoulders and depth of chest made him seem so.

The stranger met the stare of the crowd in a cool, unconcerned manner, that did much to convince them that he had not spoken, and again the sailor started forward.

"I said STOP! I shall not repeat that order."

There was no mistaking the speaker this time, although he did not move a muscle of his body

while shooting forth this threatening mandate, in a voice that startled all, and brought the sailor to an instantaneous halt.

For half a minute there was a dead silence; all eyes were bent on the stranger in the expectation that some explanation or movement would follow the order, but none came, and in a few moments a voice from the knot of English seamen asked:

"Who'n thunder are you?"

"Go ahead, Jack! Don't funk over that chap—we'll stand by ye!" encouraged another.

As if expecting him to leap at Jack, a lane had been formed between the stranger and the sailor, and notwithstanding the encouraging words of his shipmates, the latter appeared to be spellbound by the piercing gaze fixed upon him.

"That is right," quietly commended the stranger, and without removing his eyes from the sailor, continued in a louder tone:

"Your comrade is not fool enough to lose his life in attempting to punish a boy for uttering what you yourselves know to be the truth!

"If your captain is not afraid, why does he remain here, while a vessel of certainly no greater force lies outside offering battle? No attack has been made upon your courage personally; if you cannot listen to the truth, you should return to your ship and tell your courageous commander what you have heard.

"Return to your friends, my man—there is no safety in standing in that spot!"

As the young sailor obeyed, the stranger added:

"As to who I am—it's sufficient for you that I am one who *will* be obeyed!"

The last authoritative words caused an angry outburst from the English seamen. All that preceded this strange declaration of authority had been listened to in sullen silence, for every man of them secretly acquiesced in what was said.

With the utterance of the first of the angry, menacing oaths and cries which greeted the stranger's last words, a half-dozen men who were scattered through the crowd, gathered around the calm, unmoved man, leaning against the post.

The half-dozen men referred to, were all attired alike in neat sailor uniform, wore red worsted caps, were armed each with a cutlass and pair of pistols, and evidently were picked men, forming a boat's crew. They did not speak to each other, nor even look at the stranger, but ranged themselves on either side of the latter, when the English boatswain proposed:

"Let's duck the blackguard, and then make him stand treat! What d'ye say, lads?"

The proposition was greeted with a roar, and the Englishmen rushed toward the stranger.

CHAPTER X.

THE SAME AND MORE OF IT.

SHUBRICK had listened to the bold words of the stranger with a feeling which was a mixture of astonishment, admiration and delight—the last because of the advice to the English seamen to report what had occurred to the captain.

Great as was the lieutenant's delight, it was very little compared with his astonishment at the stranger's interference in behalf of Dick, and admiration of his boldness.

Unobtrusively as the worsted-capped sailors had ranged themselves on either side of the stranger, their movements had not escaped the keen-eyed lieutenant, who thought:

"That accounts for the fellow's coolness, and boldness. He's mistaken, however, in thinking that those six and himself are a match for that party of Englishmen."

"Tom! Dick! Harry!" he continued, calling the youths to him. "We must try to help our friend at the post. There will be trouble in a very few minutes, and he'll be right in the thick of it.

"You and I, White, must bear a hand with those red-capped fellows, in keeping off the Britishers.

"You, gentlemen"—to Dick and Harry—"must remain where you are, unless they use weapons—"

"Excuse me, sir," interrupted Dick, "but you said before coming ashore that we were all on the same footing?"

"Yes?"

"Then, I shall do as I think best—which is to help him who helps me!"

"And I'm going to do the same!" exclaimed Harry.

Tom was smiling and Shubrick, perplexed by this mutinous language of the boys, was wondering what was the best course to follow, when the proposition to duck the stranger was made.

As the Englishmen rushed forward shouting "Duck him! Duck him!" Shubrick saw that there was no intention to do the stranger any serious injury, for though armed and angry no weapons were drawn.

"They're merely venting the anger they feel, but cannot show before their own captain," thought the big lieutenant, and springing after the knot of excited men, seized one of those in the rear.

It was only the work of an instant to throw the man backward on the floor—and only child's play at that. Another and another followed, and then the boys joining in the attack by tripping up the unwary Englishmen, half of them were tumbling on the floor, before their comrades in front were aware of what was going on.

All of the English party had been drinking, and maddened at the thought of being thrown by a mere boy, one of the men on regaining his feet drew his cutlass and rushed at White.

"Look out, Tom!" cried Harry. "Here's a bull-dog with a bare cutlass!"

Shubrick caught the words, and turning his head saw the bloody minded seaman almost within striking distance of Tom.

The big lieutenant's great strength has been mentioned before, but it was doubled on perceiving his young companion's danger. He had just laid hold of the young sailor who had been appointed to punish Dick, intending to throw him backward like the others, but instead, lifted the man bodily above his head and hurled him at the other.

The men came together with terrible force, and when they struck the floor did not stir.

This brought the wrath of the whole party upon the Americans, and although only two of them were armed with cutlasses and pistols—being ashore on service—all had knives, and drew them as they rushed on Shubrick and his companions.

The latter were armed with dirks and pistols, but three boys and a man could hardly expect to successfully oppose twelve or fifteen armed men, and throwing himself in front of his companions, Shubrick cried:

"Back! Back, I say, or I fire!"

He held a pistol in each hand, and though it meant but two men out of a dozen or more, none cared to be one of the two, and the rush came to a sudden stop. It was only a momentary pause, for one of the men had a brace of pistols, but, short as it was, it was sufficient for the stranger (who had up to that moment remained as if nailed to the post), dart like a bolt through the irresolute seamen, and place himself beside the big lieutenant.

"Now, you've gone far enough! This must stop right here!" cried the stranger in that same terrific voice, but now the strength of the voice was, or rather seemed to be, increased ten-fold by the flashing eyes, and majestically threatening bearing of the now more than animated man.

Shubrick looked (and was), a very lion at bay. The boys, so to speak, were his cubs—and cubs with well-developed teeth and claws, too—and the agile stranger seemed a Royal Bengal tiger come to their assistance.

The stranger bore no visible arms, but his sudden appearance beside Shubrick (knocking them aside like ninepins to get there), held the man back, and the stranger continued:

"What little hurt you may have received was fully deserved. If you provoke more trouble, not one will live to leave this room!"

"Remember, men, this is neither boast nor threat—simply a warning. If you heed it, well and good—if not—your blood be on your heads!"

There was something singularly impressive in the way these words were delivered, and the bearing and tone of the man conveyed a sense of power that was much more impressive than the words—so much so that the disciplined man-o'-war's men, angry as they were, stood irresolute.

This plainly did not please the masterful stranger, and he showed the first symptom of temper by an impatient stamp of his neatly-shod, slender foot, as he sharply demanded:

"Come, men! Are ye fools? Retire quietly and quickly to your place, or you will not have an opportunity to do so five—ay, one minute hence!"

Still the men stood irresolute—too obstinately brave to retreat at the bidding of a single man, yet overawed by his authoritative tone and bearing, as well as that of Shubrick, and the determined and dangerous air of the boys—each presenting a pair of pistols.

Just what might otherwise have happened is impossible to say, but before the minute was half gone, three or four more English seamen

entered, and that turned the scale in favor of fight.

A "hurrah!" from the heretofore irresolute group of seamen plainly indicated what course they intended to follow, and as the new-comers rushed to the assistance of their comrades, the stranger emitted a low whistle. Then motioning the boys to fall back, he called:

"Ho, my tigers! Look to the youths!"

In an instant, the six seamen who had remained as motionless as statues since forming on either side of the now vacant post, dashed through the crowd and stood between the stranger and Shubrick, and the boys.

Just as the stranger called, and almost on the heels of the Englishmen, a delicate-looking boy of fourteen, or thereabouts, opened the door of the wine-shop and looked in.

Apparently alarmed at what he saw, the boy turned away, and as he did, the Englishmen, encouraged by the arrival of their comrades, dashed at the Americans and their friends.

"Now, lads, at them!" cried the master's mate, and with the first word the stranger cried:

"Ready! Pistols first—then cutlasses! Spare none!"

As has been stated, there were but four pistols and two cutlasses among the entire English party, and half of these were on the person of one of the still insensible men. Facing them were sixteen pistols, and seven cutlasses, to be wielded by stout arms, were ready to complete the work of destruction—should there be any to do.

Infuriated by their repeated defeats in attempting to punish the others, and maddened with liquor, as they were, the Englishmen would hardly have been rash enough to dare oppose their sheath-knives to these murderous odds, had not the drunken master's mate rushed ahead waving his knife.

"Alan!" called the stranger.

The response was a pistol-shot from behind the speaker, and the master's mate fell—dead.

An angry roar followed the fall of the mate, and regardless of the danger they were incurring, his comrades rushed to avenge him, firing two shots as they came.

As may be imagined, the shots were wildly directed, yet each bullet had its billet, and made its mark—one striking Shubrick in the shoulder, and the other the lad who had looked in a few minutes before, and was now dashing into the long, low room, at the head of a dozen men.

The lieutenant made no sign; but the lad fell with a loud cry that caught the ear of the stranger. Turning like a flash he was in time to see the lad falling, and with a tiger-like ferocity cried:

"Fire! Fire, and cut them down! Let not one escape you! Alan! Lock to Armand!"

He had drawn a pistol (which was hidden by a sash round his waist), and firing it as he spoke, sprung among the Englishmen with a dagger in his hand.

The six red-capped men fired at the word, as did Shubrick, and then all dashed like tigers at the Englishmen.

At the first shot the room—which was a big barnlike structure—had been deserted by the non-combatants, the proprietor running for the guard, and the others peering in wherever they could with any degree of safety watch the deadly struggle going on within.

For five minutes, shouts, shots, cries and curses filled the room, for the English were not easily conquered, and their sheath-knives were even worse than cutlasses at close quarters. Then came the warning cry, "The guard! The guard!"

This caused an almost instant cessation in the fighting, which in any event could not have lasted much longer, for nearly all the Englishmen were down—dead or wounded.

"Away with you! Let none of our wounded be left behind! Quick, or some of you will see the inside of a Portuguese prison!"

Shubrick, who had been fighting like a lion, looked for his friends on hearing this, and quickly discovered Dick and Harry, standing over Tom, who was unconscious, but before he could ask any questions, two of the red-caps seized the wounded youth, bidding his friends follow if they wished to escape arrest.

CHAPTER XI.

PRIVATEER OR PIRATE.

FOLLOWING the injunction of the red-capped seamen, Shubrick and the two midshipmen hurried after the bearers of their comrade, who took turns in carrying him. They were powerful fellows and went along at a lively trot until near the waterside where they slowed down to a walk, one explaining:

"Our boats are near at hand, senior—there is no need to hurry."

A few minutes later the boats were reached and White was placed in one, with Shubrick—himself wounded—supporting him, while the two midshipmen, who had escaped unscathed, were directed to another.

"This boat, as you see, contains one of our wounded," explained one of the red-caps to the boys, "and there is room only for us who will row it immediately to our surgeon."

This ending all objection to parting with their friends, the boys gladly took seats in the boat indicated, and Warren endeavored to get into conversation with the boat-keeper, but at the first word the latter commanded silence, and for once the midshipmite subsided.

Soon shots were heard in the direction of the wine-shop, followed quickly by the appearance of several men bearing others, and then came a half-dozen more at full speed.

Among the last to reach the boats, was the stranger who had directed the attack on the British seaman, and his arrival was the signal to push off.

"Lively, lads, lively!" he cried. "Those fools are our friends, and must not be compelled to fire by finding us here."

The men responded with a will, and after ten minutes' hard pulling along the shore, the boats entered a little sheltered cove, where the boys saw a vessel lying at anchor.

The night was dark (neither moon nor stars being visible), and except that she was a rather small, low-lying vessel, the midshipmen could distinguish nothing, but on reaching the deck they found her crowded with men and armed to the teeth.

"A privateer, or a pirate!" whispered Warren.

"Go below! You'll find the captain and your friends in the cabin," directed one of the red-caps.

As this was one of those invitations which are never refused, because they carry a command with them, Dick and Harry descended to the cabin, which they found divided into three luxuriously furnished apartments.

Seated at a small table, made of some precious wood, in the main room, was the extraordinary individual who had so boldly addressed, and fiercely attacked, the British seamen, and who had been designated as the captain.

Motioning the midshipmen to be seated, the captain resumed the thoughtful attitude in which he had been discovered—one elbow on the table, and his head resting on his hand.

Gazing at him curiously, the boys saw a man whose form indicated more of strength than the activity they had so recently seen displayed, while his face was manly, bold, decided, and rather handsome, though expressing little more than high daring, coolness, obstinacy, and a certain degree of contempt for others that its owner seldom took pains to conceal.

His head was thickly covered with a mass of black hair that was already a little grizzled, and his age was—a puzzle. It might be thirty-five, or a half-score years more.

The midshipmen were still gazing at this remarkable man, when the door of one of the state-rooms was opened, and a man entered the cabin.

"Armand?" questioned the captain, turning hastily to the new-comer.

"Has fallen asleep, and will be as well as ever in the morning," assured the latter, who was a gray-headed, grave-looking, neatly-attired man.

He carried an open case of surgical instruments in one hand, and was, what he looked to be, a physician, and the surgeon of the vessel.

The stern, gloomily-anxious expression faded from the face of the captain, and addressing the midshipmen in a courteous tone, he invited them to enter the other state-room, saying:

"You are of course anxious about your friends. Our surgeon has already given them some attention, and is now going to complete his work."

Then, addressing the surgeon in French, he continued:

"If there is any danger—any question as to who should first receive your attention—give it to the youth. I am strangely interested in him, and the lieutenant must give way to my interest."

The surgeon bowed, and they entered the state-room, Dick, who thoroughly understood the captain's order, wondering:

"How the deuce does he know Mr. Shubrick's rank?"

In the state-room, on a pile of cushions, lay Tom White, while lying on a standing bed was Shubrick.

Both were unconscious, and the latter said:

"I've remained here, doctor, because you've ordered it, but there's really nothing the matter with me except a little weakness from loss of blood, so, if you don't object, I'll get up."

He arose without waiting for the desired permission, and continued:

"The bullet traveled just under the skin and around and out at the top of the shoulder."

The surgeon looked doubtful, but a glance from the captain stopped any questioning, and he turned to Tom, saying:

"Are you too going to disappoint me by turning up all sound like your friend?"

A faint smile was the only response the wounded youth could make, and the captain sharply directed:

"Attend to your business, sir!"

"Part of it—and often the most important part of it, is to amuse and encourage the patient, sir!" retorted the surgeon, bending over the almost unconscious youth.

The latter had received several knife wounds, but only one was serious—a deep stab in the back.

After making certain that the other wounds were harmless, the surgeon turned Tom on his face, and stripped his back to get at the wound.

"Not so bad after all," declared the surgeon. "He'll be—"

A cry of astonishment, which burst from the lips of the captain interrupted the speaker, and caused a low exclamation uttered by Warren to pass unnoticed, as all—even the surgeon—turned and looked at the captain.

The latter was the picture of amazement and doubt, staring at the bare back of the youth, as if he were looking at something passing belief, but quickly recovered his usual composure, and waved the surgeon to proceed, saying:

"It is nothing! Go on, sir!"

"He will be all right in a few days—with careful attendance," slowly continued the surgeon, who, like the others, had seen that the cause of the captain's emotion, was a birthmark, in the shape of a small horse-shoe on White's right shoulder.

"Careful attention! By my soul, sir, you must see to that, if you have any love for life!"

With this grim threat the captain stalked out of the cabin—apparently unable to control himself.

CHAPTER XII.

"SOME PEOPLE CALL US PIRATES!"

SHUBRICK, the surgeon and the two midshipmen stared at each other in dull amazement. The captain's strange emotion on seeing the birthmark, and his fiercely expressed interest in one whom he had never before seen, was simply inexplicable, and the surgeon's: "Well! That beats me!" expressed the general feeling.

Further comment was prevented by the entrance of a quartermaster, who invited the strangers to accompany him, and to the surgeon delivered the significant message:

"Your assistant will relieve you, when the morning watch turns out."

"Thank you," ironically returned the other, adding in a disgusted tone:

"It's a mortal shame he wasn't killed instead of wounded! Send down a glass or two of grog, Matthews—will you?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Come, gentlemen—your quarters for the night must be such as we can arrange in the cabin."

The quarters were very comfortable, for the outer cabin was full of cushions, and the exciting events of the evening made the trio only too happy to avail themselves of the opportunity to rest. They had easily penetrated the apparent brutality of the surgeon, and had no doubt that their comrade would receive the most careful attendance, notwithstanding the wish that he had been killed.

Very tired, and of course accustomed to sleeping on a moving ship, Shubrick and his fellow-adventurers were not at all disturbed by the noise made in raising the anchor, and setting sail, so that when they awoke, and found themselves out of sight of land, they were not only surprised, but alarmed—that is, the boys were, but the lieutenant was mad—mad right through.

The trio, on awaking, were about to visit Tom's state-room, when the motion of the vessel attracted their attention, and Shubrick, directing the midshipmen to remain below, hastened on deck. One glance was sufficient to show him what had taken place, and forgetting his assumed character, he went to the captain, who was standing near the helmsman, and demanded with the regulation quarter-deck intonation:

"What does this mean, sir? You have carried

us off from our ship, without so much as 'by your leave!'"

The quartermaster and helmsman looked aghast at the tone, and the language—evidently expecting the speaker would be terribly punished if not immediately killed.

Observing these terrified looks, Shubrick remembered his apparent condition, and before the captain could speak, continued:

"Pardon me, but things are seldom what they seem, and five minutes' conversation will, I trust, excuse my language."

The captain bowed gravely, and, with a wave of his hand, invited the big lieutenant to accompany him to the cabin.

On reaching the little anteroom, the captain stopped Shubrick, saying:

"It is unnecessary for you to explain anything. I know you and your young companions must be officers; but, let me remind you, that you would have spent at least one night in a Portuguese guard-house had you not come with me, and as there were several men killed, it is more than likely you would remain there to abide the result of an official inquiry, which would undoubtedly reveal your identity."

As the captain proceeded the lieutenant's anger cooled. When he finished, Shubrick felt ashamed of the warmth and place of his attack; still he had been sent ashore on duty, and explained:

"I must apologize for my rudeness, captain, but as an officer,"—he already had some queer doubts as to what kind of an officer—"you will understand my feelings at finding myself at sea, when I tell you I was sent ashore on an important, and, as yet, only half-fulfilled mission."

"The part fulfilled being to taunt the English seamen enough to cause talk that would reach their commander?" shrewdly guessed the other, adding, with a grim smile:

"But through no fault of yours, the mark was overshot—to the sore suffering of your English friends."

"True—their loss must have been severe," assented Shubrick, wondering whether he should reveal to the other his mission on shore.

"He has certainly shown himself a staunch friend of America," reflected the lieutenant, but then came the ugly suspicion that the vessel was of an unlawful character, and would receive scant mercy if she came within range of the Hornet's guns.

As if divining the debate going on in the lieutenant's mind, the captain said:

"I do not care to know your business ashore, but if I can be of any assistance, the vessel and crew are at your service. The Sea Queen has yet to meet its match in speed, and its people—well, you have seen some of their work."

"Your generous offer deserves more recognition than I am about to give it, for before deciding to avail myself of your assistance—which would indeed be most timely—I must ask who and what you are."

"Do not misunderstand me," hastily added the big, generous-hearted lieutenant, flushing as he saw the frown gathering on the brow of the captain. "Personally, I can only tender my most sincere thanks both for what you have done and what you offer to do, but as an officer I must know with whom I am dealing."

"I have offered you the use of my brigantine and my people," slowly and coldly replied the other. "If you cannot accept the offer without prying into my private affairs—the loss is yours."

"I regret it, but so it is and must be," returned Shubrick, earnestly, adding:

"And that being the case, it is very important that we should get ashore as soon as possible."

There was a question—a request—in this statement, but the captain refused to notice it, and the lieutenant was compelled to ask:

"How soon can you conveniently land us?"

"Conveniently—not soon, at all," answered the other, with a grim smile.

The dull boom of a heavy gun interrupted the conversation at this point, and referring to it the captain, still wearing that grim smile, continued:

"That settles all doubt on the subject! We are running down the Bay of All Saints. If the wind holds as it is, you may get ashore within forty-eight hours. If it freshens—much—it is doubtful when you will get ashore—if ever!"

The report of another—and nearer—gun, reached them, as the astonished, but not altogether unsuspicious lieutenant asked:

"What do you mean, sir?"

"That little affair of last night, unfortunately, apprised the captain of the Spanish man-of-war that I was in port. He is my personal as well as official enemy, and is in pursuit. Those shots

came from his vessel, which is the fastest in port, and I am sorry to say that it will go hard with all on board if we are captured—for some people call us pirates!"

CHAPTER XIII.

RIGAUD THE ROVER.

ON board a pirate, with a man-of-war in hot pursuit! A pleasant state of affairs, truly!"

So thought Shubrick, but before he could speak an officer entered the little anteroom. He drew back immediately on seeing the captain, and his companion, instead of the attendant usually there.

"What is it, Francois?" called the captain.

The officer returned, and uttered a few hurried sentences in French.

"Repeat that in English—my friend does not understand you," directed the captain.

The officer permitted astonishment to get the better of discipline, and for one moment stared hard at the American, before announcing in very fair English:

"The frigate is almost within range, sir."

"And the wind?"

"Freshening every minute, sir."

"Very well—it does not matter. Keep everything as it is until I come up, and we will show the eager gentleman that the Sea Queen's superior is not yet afloat."

"The sky looks very threatening, sir," warned Francois.

"Has the Spaniard reduced her canvas?"

"Not when I came down, but—"

"Keep her as she is, sir! Send the men to their stations, but stir nothing—we can laugh at such a pursuer!"

"That does not sound as if you had much fear of capture?" observed Shubrick, as the pirate officer departed.

"'T would be poor policy for a general to tell his troops when going into action that they were certain to be defeated," calmly replied the other, adding:

"I must see what is going on on deck. You can accompany me, or join your friends as you please."

"I will accompany you," decided Shubrick, following the captain, who was already on his way to the deck.

About two miles astern of the Sea Queen was a large frigate, which, notwithstanding the threatening appearance of the heavens, was carrying every inch of canvas she could spread. The threatening cloud which was rolling eastward with fearful speed, had not yet broken, and with the exception of a few drops, that fell seemingly from a clear sky, it was, as yet, what is called a dry squall.

"There will be some lively work on board that frigate within a very few minutes," observed the self-confessed freebooter.

Shubrick did not reply, for a heavy crash of thunder succeeded a vivid flash of lightning, that glared so suddenly across the swarthy lineaments of the silent, attentively waiting crew, as to draw an involuntary exclamation from him.

"She is holding on to the last," continued the captain, watching his pursuer. "These squalls are always in favor of the heavier craft, but—"

"Ah! He feels it! They are shortening—we must do the same."

The speaker's sudden interruption of himself as indicated by his words, was caused by his seeing that the frigate was reducing her canvas, and after waiting another minute to get the utmost benefit—without damage—of the wind, he raised his terrific voice a trifle, and directed:

"Down with your studding-sails, Francois! Settle away that mainsail! In royal and top-gallant sails—topsail on the cap! Lively, now, and heavy as she is, we will still hold our advantage!"

The crew, who had heard the orders, were already executing them, and in a few moments the brigantine was in trim for the battle with wind and wave. Nothing was furled, but as everything was hauled up or lowered, the squall had little to waste its fury on. The diminished surface of the sails protected the spars, while the canvas was saved by the cordage.

In a short time the fury of the squall began to abate, and then (more hardy than his heavy pursuer), without waiting for the end of it, the freebooter began to sway his yards aloft, while the sea was still white with foam, and the brigantine was under all her canvas before the frigate had begun to profit by her superior physical force.

"A bold but thorough seaman, whatever else he may be!" admiringly commented Shubrick, as he saw that, through her skillful handling, the Sea Queen had not only held her advantage,

but actually increased it, and now, as the wind began to die away, drew steadily away from her pursuer.

"Good-by, Señor Lopez!" said the pirate chief, with a derisive laugh, as he, too, observed the rapidity with which his beautiful brigantine was leaving the frigate, and turning to Shubrick, invited him below, saying:

"Come, we will drink a glass to the well-named Sea Queen! The danger is past—you need worry no more—and we can afford to perform that truly Christian duty of visiting the sick!"

He was in high glee over the fulfillment of his prediction that the brigantine, notwithstanding the squall, would escape the frigate.

When they reached the anteroom, so often referred to, he struck a silver hand-bell, and directed the attendant who answered it to:

"Bring a bottle of that sherry which we took the liberty of borrowing from his Britannic Majesty!"

"'Tis the last dozen, I fear," he continued, turning to Shubrick, "and I would go a long distance out of my course to meet another consignment of it."

Shubrick made no response. The man was a self-confessed pirate, and though he had rendered no mean service to the little party of Americans, the lieutenant had no desire to cultivate his acquaintance.

Observing that Shubrick remained silent and standing, the freebooter, smiling scornfully, exclaimed, ironically:

"Ah! I forgot that you are a republican, and would doubtless consider it treason to taste wine which one king sent to another, but which the Sea Queen appropriated to her own use!"

The big lieutenant had very strict notions of honor and of duty, and quietly but firmly replied:

"Sir, you have rendered myself and my friends great service, and doubtless incurred on our behalf even more danger than we are aware of in performing it, but you have yourself declared this vessel to be of an unlawful character, and my most anxious desire is to quit your craft as soon as possible, and when I do, never to set eyes on it again, for it would be my duty, if I should, to endeavor to capture or destroy it, and perhaps be compelled to cross swords with you, to whom I feel so much indebted. Under such circumstances, any show of friendship now would be simply farcical!"

For a moment or two, the pirate seemed touched by the quiet, earnest words of the lieutenant.

"Thank you for your frankness," he said in an unusually low tone. Then with a reckless laugh, he exclaimed:

"My dear sir, you give me too much credit! Helping you never entered my mind, and though I hate the English, I would never have brought attention to myself for interfering, had it not been for a fancied resemblance—"

Stopping abruptly, as if he had said more than was judicious, the speaker changed the subject to White, asking:

"What rank does the wounded youth hold?"

"None—he is a volunteer, having escaped from his own vessel, which was a prize to the Java."

"The prize by the by was bearing toward San Salvador when last seen," added Shubrick.

"Yes—I saw her, but is he not very young to command an armed vessel?"

Shubrick had remarked the interest manifested by the other in White, and now bluntly referred to it, saying:

"Yes, he is young for such a responsibility, but I was not aware she was armed—you seem better posted regarding the young man than any of us, and, indeed, more interested in him."

"Very true, and it is just possible no one has a better right to be interested in him," calmly replied the corsair.

"I am known as Rigaud the Rover—Claude Rigaud—it is as good a name as any other—but no unresisting man has ever suffered at my hands, nor has any female been maltreated by me or mine. Secure from the guns of you gentlemen of the cruisers, through the speed of my brigantine, I have dared to do what few who sail under such a flag as mine would risk—land my prisoners."

"Still, I have managed to escape paying the penalty, and am less and less inclined to molest any vessels but those of the enemies of France, as I grow more and more wealthy."

"Why not abandon the miserable—infernal business entirely?" asked Shubrick, as the Rover paused.

"Because it is free, careless, happy in its fash-

ion—and not miserable!" quickly retorted the other, adding:

"And as for its being infernal—as I am accustomed to deal with those who fall in my way—nine merchantmen out of ten would rather be a prize to the Sea Queen than any of the old, and most of the new privateersmen."

Rigaud paused again, and for a few minutes seemed buried in thought, which Shubrick did not disturb, thinking his words regarding the despicable calling of the Rover were taking root.

That he was not mistaken in this, was evidenced by the words uttered by Rigaud as he started toward the inner cabin:

"I would I could learn that youth's history without asking it! It might make a difference—there may yet be something to live for!"

He was entirely oblivious of Shubrick's presence, and was simply uttering the result of the thoughts suggested by the lieutenant's words.

"Come," said the latter, "I will undertake to get you his history." The Rover looked startled for a moment, then bowed, and followed Shubrick into the cabin.

CHAPTER XIV.

RIGAUD INTERESTED IN TOM—TOM IN ARMAND.

AS Rigaud and Shubrick approached the wounded youth's state-room (the door of which was partly open), they saw it was now occupied by four—Tom, himself, Dick and Harry, and the boy, Armand.

"Another time," whispered the Rover, but even as he spoke, Tom's voice was heard.

"Dick is pretty bad off," he was saying, "but, at all events, he knows that he was born in France, while I haven't the faintest suspicion of where I was born, for the box containing all the papers relating to my birth, parentage, and other family matters, was stolen by a scoundrelly Spaniard—Moredo was his name."

The Rover started on hearing the name of the robber, but quickly recovered his usual composure, and was all attention when Warren laughingly observed:

"Why, you're both mysterious beings, and as far as I can see there's no difference in the depth of the mystery."

"Not much," returned Tom, in the same vein, "and if Dick was dark, and two or three years older, I'd claim him as a twin brother, for I have not told you that my father, also, went on a treasure-hunting expedition and never returned—though my mother managed to reach the United States."

The Rover seemed laboring under great excitement, which increased as the musical voice of Armand was heard, wonderingly commenting:

"How strange! And how much stranger it would be if you and Mr. Cooper—"

"What's that? What did you call me?" interrupted Mr. Cooper.

"Well, then, Dick!" corrected Armand, laughing merrily. "Wouldn't it be a wonderfully queer thing now, if you should turn out to be brothers?"

"Very! Especially as my brother was younger than me."

There was a general laugh at Dick's dry response, and Shubrick heard Rigaud mutter:

"True, true! And there was but one, though the stories are strangely alike—"

Armand's merry, musical laugh interrupted the Rover's reflections—and not pleasantly it would seem, for he frowned, and, motioning Shubrick to follow him, returned to the anteroom—the heavy carpet on the floor rendering their exit as noiseless as their entrance.

"Oblige me by going to your friend—the wounded youth—immediately, and ascertain his object in visiting these waters," said Rigaud, and summoning an attendant at the same time, directed him to send the surgeon to Master Armand.

"He may not have cared to tell all his story to the others," suggested the Rover, again addressing Shubrick, "and it might be well to send them away—you can easily find a pretext—and I have sent for the surgeon in order to get Armand out of the room."

"Stay! The surgeon shall say they are exciting the patient, and order all of them on deck," he added, as Shubrick was about to enter the cabin.

"That will be better," assented the latter, and taking possession of one of the two luxurious chairs in the anteroom awaited the arrival of the surgeon, who quickly appeared, and as quickly carried out the instructions given him by Rigaud.

"Now is your opportunity," directed the latter, as the boys passed out, and feeling not a

little curious and quite interested, the lieutenant entered White's state-room.

A full hour elapsed before Shubrick returned to the impatiently-waiting Rover, who was pacing the floor of the little room with bent head and knitted brows.

"It is as you surmised," began Shubrick immediately on entering. "White did not tell all his story, though there is but little of importance to add to it, and that is connected with the cause of his visiting these waters."

"Well? Why do you hesitate? That is what I wish to know."

"I hardly know how to express myself without offending you," slowly replied the good-natured lieutenant. "And, yet, it must be said, and you, of course, know how the world regards such men as you."

"Well, well?"

"It is not well, for before I can give the information you desire, you must tell me *why* you wish for it."

"Is it so important—so valuable a secret—as that?" asked the Rover, with a curious smile.

"That is the state of affairs, at all events," firmly replied Shubrick, though not a little puzzled by the strange expression of the Rover's face, which now assumed a triumphant look.

"I am satisfied, quite satisfied," he laughingly declared; "you could scarcely have told me more plainly that he is treasure-hunting, but"—and his voice grew mournful—"my motives must remain my own, at least for the present."

Fighting Jack was a fighter—not a diplomat, and his handsome, expressive countenance, was apt to reveal a great deal to a keen observer. Just now he looked a trifle upset, and the keen-eyed sea-rover remarking this, said:

"There is nothing to worry about, and you can plume yourself on the fact that your recent talk with me has led to the ending of the career of the Sea Queen—under the red flag of the sea-rover."

"Do you mean it, or are you merely jesting, or are trying to—"

"Trying to deceive you, to learn what I already know? No. I am in deadly earnest, as you will probably see before you leave me."

The Rover turned away and ascended to the deck with the last word, leaving Shubrick full of wonder—and just a little doubt—to follow more leisurely.

As the lieutenant ascended the companion-ladder, Armand descended, and went straight to Tom's state-room. The latter was up and dressed—had been all the morning—and greeted the boy (who looked rather excited) with a pleasant smile, as he asked:

"Well, Armand, what's all the excitement about?"

"Just this. The captain knows your mission in these waters, and means to assist you. More than that—he intends never again to hoist the only flag this vessel has ever sailed under."

"How do you know he is aware of my business down here?"

The color deepened in the cheeks of the handsome boy, as he explained:

"Well, I listened. I suspected there was something up when the surgeon said we were worrying you, after declaring only an hour before that you were all right and only needed cheery company, so I swung over the stern, and into my own state-room, where I heard you tell Mr. Shubrick your story."

"He went to my uncle, and I followed, and, listening again, found that they had been listening to us, but Mr. Shubrick would not tell my uncle what he wanted most to know—your object in visiting these waters—until he was first informed why uncle was anxious to know that."

"Did he—your uncle—say what his object was?"

"No, and he guessed yours, but assured Mr. Shubrick that the flag of the Rover would never again be raised over this vessel."

"Then, he and Mr. Shubrick went on deck, and I went back the same way—just in time to hear my uncle order Francois (the first lieutenant, you know), to lay our course for the retreat, and to pack every sail on the brigantine, so he must think he will be in time to catch the man who robbed you of the map."

"In which event, I presume, it will be simply a case of the survival of the stronger—not the fittest?" laughingly suggested Tom, adding:

"Well, I only hope he will be in time, even if the treasure does stick to his fingers, for where the map is found, there also will be the papers relating to my birthplace and parentage, and I am anxious to recover those—more so than the treasure."

"And, I believe my uncle is fully as anxious to see those papers as you are!" declared Armand.

"He is deeply interested in you, and everything concerning you."

"That's queer," commented Tom, gazing reflectively at his companion, and then, as if the idea had just struck him, exclaimed:

"I say, Armand! Do you know that you are an awfully handsome fellow?"

"Don't talk that way, please!" pleaded the boy, blushing like a girl, and causing Tom, heedless of the appeal, to continue:

"Jupiter Ammon! Talk about your beauties!"

"Why, Armand, if you were only a girl you'd set every man in the Sea Queen fighting for you—"

"Stop, sir! You must not talk to me in that way!" interrupted Armand, springing up, and the tone and air—the very words, were so much like those of an offended beauty, that Tom stared in astonishment, which increased as he saw the color of the youth deepen under his gaze.

"Great Caesar, Armand!" he began, but with a passionate cry, that was half-anger, half-fear, Armand burst into tears, and rushed from the room.

The next moment the door of the adjoining state-room was opened and shut, violently, and then locked.

Tom sat staring at the chair lately occupied by Armand, like one in a dream. For two or three minutes he sat motionless, and was only aware of Dick's presence when that young gentleman (who had come to the open door immediately after Armand's hurried departure), having coughed twice without attracting attention, tapped him on the shoulder, saying:

"Wake up, Tom! There's a vessel in sight which Mr. Shubrick thinks you are interested in, and you are wanted on deck."

CHAPTER XV.

TOM TELLS THE WHOLE STORY.

AROUSED by Dick's startling announcement that the vessel he followed all the way from New York, was supposed to be in sight, Tom seemed to pull himself together, but there remained a rather bewildered expression on his usually bold, bright face when he reached the deck.

"Is that the vessel you were in search of—that schooner about two points off the weather bow?" asked Shubrick, handing Tom the glass he had been using.

"The weather bow! The weather bow, man! What's wrong with you?" impatiently exclaimed the lieutenant, as the still bewildered youth pointed his glass in the other quarter.

"I feel all mixed up, sir," truthfully replied Tom, bringing his glass to bear in the right direction.

The vessel under examination was visible to the naked eye, and with the glass Tom had no trouble in deciding it was the one he was looking for.

"Yes, sir—that's the schooner I'm after, or her double!" he declared, after a short time.

"That's all that's wanted—you don't look well, and had better go below," advised the captain, who was standing within earshot.

The advice was agreeable—Tom wanted a chance to do some thinking—and without a word retired to the cabin, but he was not destined to remain there long alone. Dick and Harry were within earshot as well as the captain, and exchanged wondering glances on hearing Shubrick's question, and the answer to it.

"Let's follow him and find out what this means," whispered Harry, and as all eyes were fixed on the schooner, he and Dick slipped below unobserved.

"He hasn't treated us fair," declared Warren on reaching the ante-room. "You told all you knew about yourself, but he's been holding something back from us, while even this captain knows all about it."

"Looks like it," assented Dick. "Let's go in and tackle him."

Entering the cabin, the two indignant middies found Tom sitting at the table, his head resting on his hand—the picture of meditation. He sat facing the doorway, but did not appear to notice their entrance, nor did they notice that the door of Armand's state-room was closed as they entered.

"Well, sir, what have you got to say for yourself? What excuse have you to offer for concealing from your friends what you tell to strangers?"

As Harry made this demand in a loud, severe tone, Tom started up, demanding in turn:

"What the deuce are you talking about?"

"What? Surely you are not going to try to deny that you've been following a schooner from New York?"

"Oh, no! I'll have to admit the schooner," replied Tom, smiling slightly at the young midshipman's mock severity of tone and manner.

"And, I may as well tell you, now, he continued, "that in the box containing my papers was a map of some sort, showing the location of the treasure which had drawn my father from home, and which cost him—and my mother, eventually—their lives."

"It came near costing me, also, my life, for I discovered the fellow in the act of carrying off the box, the night my adopted mother died. He struck at me with a dagger, but fortunately the point glanced off instead of going between my ribs."

"Several of our boarders—the good woman who adopted me kept an inn—pursued the thief, but escaped, and we lost all trace of him for several days. Finally, Maxwell, who boarded at the inn, noticed that a schooner about which he and I had had some talk of buying, or hiring, was missing, and on investigation found that Moredo had bought it, and sailed southward a day or two before."

"I had just converted the inn (which was left to me), into cash, and hiring the schooner from which you saw us escape, started in pursuit. Both vessels were fast, but it would have been a hopeless chase, had not Maxwell learned that Moredo had sailed so hurriedly that he was without stores or water for anything like a prolonged cruise. So, keeping track of him through inquiring of every northern bound craft we met, we managed to get pretty close on his heels—through his having to stop here and there for stores, though he never waited long enough at any port to lay in a large supply, until Porto Rico was reached."

"He seems to have felt at home on reaching that point, and remained there so long that we almost had him, but he gave us the slip, and as we unwisely fired on him, just after leaving Porto Rico, he must have suspected something, for try as we might, we could never again get within range of him."

"We kept pretty close together until the day before we met you, when both ran right into the jaws of the Java."

"As we were armed, and had the American colors flying, while Moredo sent up the English flag, the Java, of course, made all sail for us. We carried on a running fight until suddenly the wind died away, and then, as we were lying within easy range of her guns—not to speak of her boats—there was nothing for it but to strike our colors."

"Moredo, meantime, had managed to slip out of sight, and that's the last I saw of him until a few minutes ago."

Having finished this brief outline of the chase of Moredo, Tom relapsed into thoughtful silence.

"And to think you concealed such an interesting story from us!" Harry exclaimed in mock reproach. "How could you do it? Why did you not tell us this morning?"

"I would have told you if she hadn't been present!" was the absent-minded, but none the less startling reply.

"She?" chorused the midshipmen.

"Eb? What's up now?" asked Tom, starting out of the reverie into which he had fallen.

"Who is the 'she' you are talking or dreaming about?" counter-questioned Dick.

"She?" echoed Tom, looking first bewildered and then confused. "She"—catching at the loop-hole Dick had left him—"I guess I must have been dreaming."

"Yes—I guess so," drawled Harry, who was not at all satisfied with this explanation, but Dick accepted it without question.

"Better see the surgeon, Tom," he suggested, and turning on Harry exclaimed:

"Get out of here, you little monkey! And, don't fail to send the surgeon here at once, or I'll—"

"Go for him yourself, eh?" grinned Harry.

The report of a gun from the deck above interrupted the boys at this point, and all three hurried on deck, only to be immediately ordered below by the captain.

"It is more than likely that fellow would pitch the box, papers, and all overboard, if he saw any boys on board," they heard him explain to Shubrick, which appeased their anger.

Scarcely had the boys reached the cabin, when the roar of another gun above, excited their imagination and sent all thoughts of "she" to the winds.

"That gun was shot," observed Harry. "Your Spanish friend must be trying his heels."

The midshipman was nearly right, but a cheer which followed close upon the report of the gun told of some advantage resulting from the shot.

which, of course, added to their excitement, and caused much speculation as to what it was.

A minute after they heard a boat being lowered, and Dick stated the situation exactly when he exclaimed:

"By George! She's hove to, and they're going to board her!"

About the same time Captain Rigaud was saying to Shubrick:

"And, now, for the precious box! Remember, sir, that we are dealing with a treacherous scoundrel, and at the first sign that he is giving way to his natural disposition, give him every gun you can bring to bear on him! Do not hesitate on our account!"

With the last words, the captain sat down in the stern-sheets of the cutter—where he had been standing while speaking—and the crew gave way.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOM RECOVERS HIS PAPERS.

FIVE minutes after the departure of the cutter a quartermaster entered the cabin and informed the excited boys that "Mr. Shubrick wished to see them."

No second invitation or request was needed. With a whoop more creditable to a Comanche than a Christian, Harry darted out of the cabin, Dick close at his heels and Tom just a trifle behind.

The lieutenant greeted the boys pleasantly, and pointing to the schooner—about two cables' lengths distant—explained:

"That was the cause of your confinement—as it was of most of the men. As it is taken, you are of course at liberty."

"Ah, White!" he continued, as Tom approached. "There is good news for you, I believe. That white flag in the rigging means that everything is quiet and your box of papers secured."

"Tom doesn't look so immensely delighted as the lieutenant expected," commented Harry, in a whisper.

"No; seems to me he's looking rather queer," returned Dick.

Shubrick, too, seemed rather put out by the cool way in which Tom received the news of his good fortune, but in a little while the latter brightened up and thanked the lieutenant for the interest he had shown in his (Tom's) affairs.

"Well, you'll soon be out of agony—here comes the boat," remarked the lieutenant, as Tom finished expressing his thanks.

A few minutes after the cutter came alongside, and as the captain stepped on deck he called:

"Alan! Pass the word for Alan!"

The words were scarcely uttered when a tall, powerful man (who wore a uniform which was neither naval nor military, but a combination of both), hurried forward and gruffly inquired:

"Did ye want me, or not?"

"I do," replied the erstwhile dreaded Rover, smiling in spite of the fact that he was well accustomed to this style of being addressed—one in which no other man on board would even dream of venturing to speak to him.

"Vera well, then. What is it ye'r wantin'? I do d'test a lot o' loons ca'in Allan! Allan!"

"Never mind, Alan; I've brought a prisoner from yonder vessel, and to your care only will I confide him. He is an old friend—"

"Ah! Here he is."

The prisoner was Moredo, and though more than a dozen brows were knitted when he was pushed upon the deck, yet one man greeted him cordially—and this seemed to have a more depressing effect than the scowls of the others.

"Ah, sir, it's good for sore eyes t' see ye!" declared Alan. "Never did I hope to have the pleasure o' layin' hand on ye—eye, I should say—again. Dear, dear, but it's a pity t' see ye comin' back after so long, trussed like a turkey."

"Here, some o' ye, help the gentleman t' the forehold—where I'll call on ye, directly, Misther Moredo."

A dozen men came—rushed—to obey the order to help the prisoner, each of whom looked vengefully enough to kill him, but Alan waved them back, and calling two who did not appear as eager as the others, bade them "escort the gentleman to the forehold—carefully."

Immediately after seeing his prisoner in the hands of Alan, the captain desired Shubrick to accompany him to the cabin—shooting a curious glance at White as he passed below.

"Queer sort of a way he looked at you, Tom," remarked Dick.

"Yes—and where's that box?" put in Harry. The youth most interested smiled, and quietly replied:

"Never mind the looks, boys—and, as for the

box, periaaps he has left that behind and taken the papers."

"But the papers belong to you!" protested Harry.

"All in good time, my boy. Mr. Shubrick is below—he will look after my interests," assured Tom.

"Yes—that settles it!" asserted Dick, adding: "Let's go forward and find out what they've been doing on board the schooner."

The boys had a sublime faith in the big lieutenant. When he was at the helm, they cast care to the winds, and went straight ahead regardless of consequences.

"Captain and Mr. Shubrick wish to see you below, sir," announced Alan, touching Tom's sleeve, shortly after the boys had gone forward.

"Good-by—Tom!" commented Harry. "I suppose it will be Lord This or Count That, when you come back."

Tom laughed—a little nervously, his friends thought—and followed Alan below. At the entrance to the ante-room the latter stopped, and with a significant nod toward the interior, whispered rather than said:

"Good luck t' ye, laddie!"

Entering, Tom found Shubrick and the captain seated at the table upon which lay a bundle of papers.

Waving the youth to a chair the captain laid his hand upon the papers, saying:

"I have taken what may seem to you an unwarranted liberty in presuming to examine these papers before delivering them to you, their rightful owner, but my reason for doing so will, I believe, prove ample apology."

"Your father, Raoul D'Artois, after whom you were named, was, like many other gentlemen of rank, constantly conspiring for the restoration of the Bourbon family, and as he was prominent in these movements, it was more than likely these papers would contain the names of men who would not now care to have it known that they had been engaged in such work."

"I was a—an intimate friend of your father, and my own name—though I should not care—would be apt to appear in the lists I have mentioned, so, in one sense, I think I had a right to examine these papers, eh?"

"Prefaced by the explanation you have made, and done in my presence, the examination would have received my sanction," coolly replied Tom, as we will continue to call him.

He was perfectly correct, and he knew it. So did the men, and they exchanged significant, and not by any means congratulatory glances.

"I am, of course, indebted to you for having recovered the papers—that goes without saying, but there was just as much likelihood of those papers containing a family secret as a political secret. For that reason, if no other, I should have been present."

"I thank you for the papers—'tis all I can do—and you, Mr. Shubrick, for the real interest, and not curiosity, you have manifested in my behalf."

Bowing as he expressed his thanks, and picking up his papers, Tom was about to withdraw to the state-room he had occupied the previous night, when Rigaud stopped him with:

"One minute, sir! Among your papers you will find the map which gives the location of the treasure, but I wish to warn you that that has been removed. If I had not been afraid that Moredo would destroy your other papers, I should have punished him by not interfering with his digging for the treasure."

"I wish to save you the disappointment—that is all," he continued, in answer to Tom's doubting expression of countenance.

"How do you know it has been removed?" asked the latter.

"Because 'twas I removed it—many years ago."

CHAPTER XVII.

RAOUL D'ARTOIS.

THE feeling of disappointment which crept over Tom on hearing the Rover's announcement made him feel all the more certain that the latter spoke the truth, but he had come too far and gone through too much to accept any man's statement regarding the whereabouts of the treasure.

"You are determined to test the truth of what I have told you, I see," observed the captain, reading the youth's expressive countenance as easily as an open book.

"I am."

"Very well, it is but natural, I suppose, and as we are bound for the former place of de-

posit, you shall have an opportunity of doing so, though your friends are anxious to return to their duty."

"Thank you for offering to serve me first; but it would be unfair to detain them in order to satisfy what is now little more than a desire to see for myself."

Unconsciously the lieutenant nodded approval of this, and the Rover asked:

"Then you will not be disappointed to find nothing where you expected riches?"

"Not at all, sir. To hope for anything else, in the face of what you have told me, would be foolish."

"But you have only my word for that," suggested the Rover.

"Oh, no! Mr. Shubrick's silence confirms your statement," was the calm reply.

The captain bit his lip and glanced at the lieutenant with a half-vexed smile, while he urged:

"But this tale might have been got up to deceive you, and lull any suspicion you might have when you come to dig for the treasure and find none. The temptation would be a great one, and we have had plenty of time to alter the map."

"I should be sorry to be the man to propose any such thing to Mr. Shubrick," calmly replied Tom, and, after a moment's hesitation, added:

"And, really, sir, I feel perfectly sure that you are not the man to make such a proposition to any one."

The Rover flushed with pleasure, and shot an oddly triumphant glance at Shubrick, when Tom thus completed his expression of confidence in the honor of both men.

"Thank you, Raoul (!)," he said, in a tone so (unconsciously) affectionate as to startle the youth and cause him to cast an inquiring glance first at the speaker and then at Shubrick.

He obtained no satisfaction or explanation from the expression of the countenance of either. The lieutenant was attentively examining the silver lamp swinging overhead, while the Rover, evidently only half conscious of his surroundings and of what he was saying, continued:

"Thank you, Raoul! There are many, many matters that look very black against me, but do not forget that there are two sides to every story, and do not judge me too harshly (!)."

"What do you mean, sir?" cried Tom, unfortunately, or otherwise, too amazed to restrain himself from interrupting the Rover's train of thought.

"Eh? What have I been saying?" demanded the latter, starting up in alarm.

"Nothing of any account," assured the lieutenant.

Rigaud looked relieved, and resuming the conversation, said:

"I was about to say that I was—that your father and my humble self were, once, intimate friends, and that he saw fit to confide to me a large sum which was to be devoted to the care and protection of his family in case anything happened to him. Just what the amount was, I cannot now remember, but it has increased wonderfully and is sufficient to prevent you from being affected by the loss of the treasure—in fact it formed the greater part of the treasure."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, the money which I shall take an early opportunity of placing in your hands, formed the greater part of the treasure you came so far to be disappointed in finding."

"Those were perilous days for all who were suspected of favoring royalty, and the safest place for one's money was out of the country," added the Rover in an explanatory way, which, however, only increased some very strange suspicions that were growing upon the astonished youth.

"For," reasoned Tom, "truth needs little explanation, if any, and this man seems to deem it necessary to cushion all his bare facts—if they are facts, and all of the facts."

"Sail, ho!"

As this hail from aloft came echoing down to the cabin, the occupants sprang to their feet.

Half a minute had hardly elapsed, when Alan stuck his head into the cabin to announce:

"An American man-o'-war just showed out o' the bay, captain!"

"How d'ye know she's an American? How far off is she? Who reported her?"

"One at a time, if ye please, sir," calmly replied the unmoved Alan.

"First, I don't know anythin' at all about it—how could I, an' me here all the time? But

there's a laddie here—one o' the young Americans—that sighted her, an' he says she's his own vessel—the Hornet!

"I hope she'll fly by 'ithout stingin' us!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT BOY IS MY BROTHER.

AS Alan ceased, Dick entered, followed by the lieutenant of the Sea Queen.

"Hornet's about two miles to leeward, sir! Just rounded the point and bearing down to us," reported the midshipman—to Shubrick.

Francois nodded confirmation of this fact to his captain, and the latter looked inquiringly at the big lieutenant.

"No doubt about its being the Hornet?" asked Shubrick.

"No, sir. Harry and I were aloft together and knew her as soon as she came into view," promptly assured Dick.

"Very good—keep your eye on her and report any change in her course, instantly!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"You will do the same, Francois!" ordered the Rover, and the lieutenant of the Sea Queen bowed and withdrew—looking very much astonished.

"And will you oblige me by leaving—" began Shubrick, addressing Tom, but before he could finish, the latter was in the respectful attitude of a subordinate, saying:

"I am under your orders, sir."

"No, no! But I wish to be alone with Captain Rigaud for a few minutes—"

Tom bowed and withdrew.

Five minutes later, the Rover and Shubrick came on deck, and the former ordered his gig to be lowered and manned.

The order was quickly fulfilled, and as soon as the boat was in readiness, Shubrick stepped into the stern-sheets and directed its course to cut off the swiftly approaching Hornet, which hove to as the gig neared it, and the lieutenant ascended to the deck, where his appearance was greeted with a storm of cheers.

At the expiration of a half-hour, Shubrick descended to the waiting boat, and a few minutes after he stepped on the deck of the Sea Queen.

"It is all right!" he said significantly to the Rover, who had been calmly pacing the deck, amid the wondering crew.

"A word with you in private, sir," he continued, and both retired to the cabin.

While the captain and lieutenant were below, the Hornet filled her topsails and forged slowly along until she lay between the brigantine and schooner—then the maintopsail was laid to the mast, and she hove to.

Tom, Dick and Harry, hanging in the lee rigging of the Sea Queen, waved their caps to their comrades aboard the Hornet, and received three hearty cheers in return.

The crew could not understand what was going on, but each was confident in the ability of their commander, and as neither had beat to quarters, a spirit of friendliness caused the crew of the Sea Queen to return the cheers from the Hornet.

"Bid the loons stop the'r noise, Mr. Francis, said Alan, adding:

"Mebbe it's ropes that 'll be stoppin' the'r throats before the'r' aweer o' it."

The first lieutenant of the Sea Queen was accustomed to the grumbling of the Rover's confidential—and deservedly so—"man," and paid no attention to the request. It was, in fact, unnecessary, for the captain and Shubrick now returned to the deck and silence reigned supreme until the latter called "his boys" from the rigging.

Tom obeyed the summons promptly enough—though in a manner which befitted his independence—but the others raced to see which should first touch the deck, and Dick fell. The distance was short—less than a dozen feet—and he had struck on a coil of rope, but when the surgeon, who (like every one else), was on deck, attempted to raise him, a faint cry of pain escaped the lad.

"Easy," he said. "Let me come up all straight, if possible. I think there are some ribs broken and there's a queer pain all down my back."

"Spinal column," muttered the surgeon, stooping and lifting Dick as tenderly as a mother would her babe.

"Take him to the cabin," directed the captain, and the injured youth was placed in the state-room lately occupied by Tom.

No one had any idea that Dick was seriously injured. His words had been heard by the captain and Shubrick, and as broken ribs are not regarded as dangerous—especially aboard ship—

Tom and Harry were the only ones who followed their comrade below.

"Here, you," said the surgeon to Harry, "help me strip him."

"Nothing but a couple of ribs, after all," declared the surgeon, in an almost regretful tone, after examining the injured youth.

"Hello!" he continued, with a start, turning to Tom and pointing to Dick's shoulder, on which was a plainly-marked horseshoe. "You have the same birth-mark."

"Keep him stripped while I go for the captain and Mr. Shubrick," requested Harry, darting out of the room.

"What do you want?" asked the captain a minute later, as, followed by the lieutenant and midshipman, he entered the state-room.

"I wanted to show you this," said Harry, uncovering Dick's shoulder and pointing to the birth-mark.

Rigaud started, passed his hand across his eyes as if to clear his vision, came closer and scrutinized the birth-mark, and then looked helplessly from one to another of those about him.

"I say, doctor!" called Dick. "Cover me, will you—it's cold here."

The words broke the spell, and the Rover exclaimed:

"It is wonderful! I cannot understand it!"

"What?" asked Tom in a strangely calm tone.

"That mark—it is a fac-simile of that one on your shoulder!" was the excited response.

"I can. Whoever you may be—that boy is my brother!"

CHAPTER XIX.

AND LAST.

EXCEPT the Rover, no one seemed much surprised by Tom's assertion. The boys' stories—as similar as the birth-marks—had prepared those present for something of the kind.

"But this boy's brother was younger while you are older," objected the excited Rover.

"That is the story told by a feeble old man on his death-bed, whose wits were wool-gathering—who could not remember even the name of the boy's father," interposed Shubrick.

"Ah! That makes it easier—but there was only one child? Perhaps afterwards—"

The Rover was again indulging in his dangerous habit of thinking aloud, but paused as he met the calm, questioning eye of Tom fixed upon him.

"It must be so," he continued, nodding at the latter, "your feelings are the best indication of it. Come with me—you, too, Mr. Shubrick."

"Well, Dick, you and Tom are all right now," said Harry, as the others retired. "I knew you were brothers from the moment I saw that mark on Tom's shoulder."

"And do you know," he added, "I've an idea that Forrean knew it, too?"

"Why, what causes you to think that?"

"Well, the day you saved his life, some of us noticed the mark when changing your clothes, and there was some talk about it which, of course, he heard. The same thing happened when Tom stripped after the Java affair—for he fought all through it soaking wet. Nobody cared to speak of it to you, though several of us noticed it."

Shubrick and Tom now returned, and the former said:

"Dick, my lad, we are all pretty well satisfied that, notwithstanding the age discrepancy, you and Tom are brothers."

"So am I," promptly returned Dick, smiling; "Tom, give us your hand—I'll have to adopt you into the Cooper family."

Instead of his hand, Tom gave him both arms until Dick shouted:

"Look out for my ribs!"

"Do you think he would be injured by removal?" Shubrick asked of the surgeon.

"Not at all—if he is carefully handled."

"Good! Come, Dick, get ready as soon as you can to return to the Hornet. Our trip ashore resulted in something—but not as we expected. That scoundrel, Forrean, betrayed us to the English captain—Maxwell learned of it through an English seaman—so, as there's no use waiting any longer, the captain's going to cruise for other game."

Leaving the boys to help Dick in dressing, Shubrick went on deck, where he met the Rover—his gaze fixed on the schooner.

"What about your prisoner?" asked the lieutenant.

"His punishment will be the last act in the career of Rigaud, the Rover. We are going to the Retreat, and there will decide how he shall be punished. Death in some form awaits him."

"What will you do with the vessel?"

"I have spoken to Francois, and we have de-

cided to turn her into a privateer. He will offer her to your Government first, however, on condition that he is appointed commander."

Shubrick looked surprised, but made no comment, and Rigaud continued:

"I have a letter here, Mr. Shubrick, which I wish delivered to my—to those young men in case I do not run across you again within a month. You will continue cruising in these waters, I suppose?"

"That is our captain's intention."

The three boys now came on deck—Dick a little pale, but smiling bravely as he was helped into the boat, and after a cordial parting with Rigaud, the others followed. In a few minutes the boat was alongside the Hornet and Captain Lawrence received the absentees warmly.

All three vessels now got under way—the Hornet, with the schooner in company, standing northward, while the Sea Queen continued on her course southward.

Within a week, Dick was feeling as well as ever, and just in time to distinguish himself in the capture of the British sloop-of-war Peacock, a vessel of the same force as the Hornet.

Space forbids a description of the engagement, which, though it lasted but fifteen minutes was a very hot one—indeed its short duration proves how hot it must have been to compel a well-handled, bravely-defended vessel to strike her colors in that time.

Shubrick acted as first lieutenant during the fight—filling the place of Stewart, who was ill, in a style that won the hearts of officers and crew alike.

As usual, he escaped unhurt, and his luck in getting into battle was now generally believed to carry with it immunity from injury.

Tom, Dick and Harry each did their utmost to surpass the other, and Dick carried off the prize for daring. Time and again his escape from death seemed miraculous, and when the Peacock struck, he was placed on board of her under Lieutenant Conner.

Captain Lawrence was only too delighted to have an opportunity of distinguishing his pet, and publicly complimented him.

"You have certainly won the right to be placed on the prize," he said, a little proud himself of the fact.

"I understand they christened you Dandy Dick, on the Constitution, but I think the lads of the Hornet will agree that Daring Dick would be more suitable."

A cheer from the men testified their approval of the captain's speech, and the boat being in readiness, Dick took his place in the launch with the prize crew.

Dick's adventures for that day, however, were not over, for the prize crew was not fairly aboard when the Peacock sunk.

Many of the English, and several of the Americans, went down with the brig, but the two officers, and most of their men, were saved in the Peacock's launch.

"Well, Dick, I'm sorry—sincerely sorry for those who were lost, but I'm glad to get you back," declared Lawrence, when the middy returned.

A week after the capture of the Peacock, the Hornet ran into San Salvador.

The time fixed for the delivery of Rigaud's letter was close at hand, and Shubrick was thinking of it when he saw the Sea Queen lying at anchor just out of the harbor.

Scarcely had the Hornet dropped anchor when a boat from the brigantine came alongside. In it was a beautiful girl of sixteen or thereabouts, sitting beside Captain Rigaud.

The latter came on deck, whispered a word to Shubrick, and the latter immediately ordered a whip rigged.

Tom, Dick and Harry were on deck when the girl was hoisted aboard, and to the two former Rigaud introduced her, saying:

"This is your cousin, Marie. She will accompany you to New York, where I will join or precede you unless the Sea Queen has lost her speed."

Tom stared very hard for a minute; Marie blushed furiously, and Dick looked astonished—though he did not (as his brother did) recognize in the new-found, beautiful cousin, Master Armand of the Sea Queen!

The latter did manage to reach New York with the Hornet, and here Tom and Dick received from the erstwhile Rover a certificate of deposit which made both wealthy among the wealthiest, but both stuck to their profession.

What! leave the sea, with its opportunities for a career of glory, for a dull life ashore?

No such fate for them!

THE END.

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